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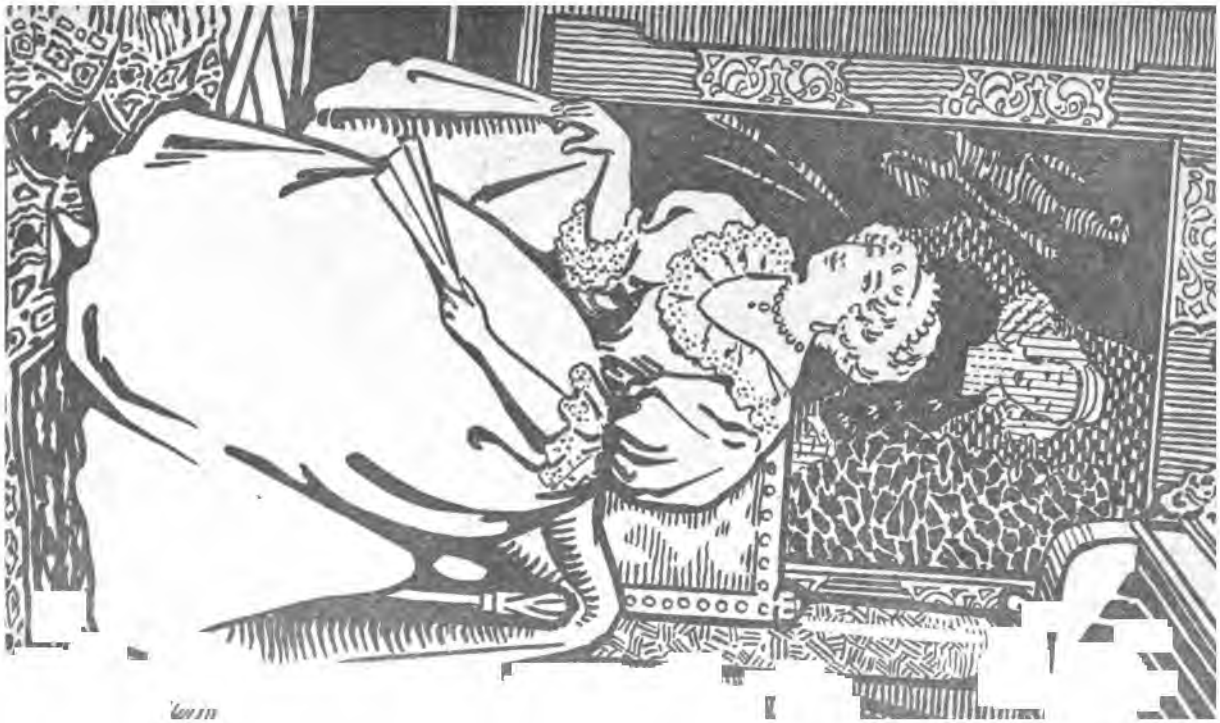

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE ACADEMY.

Beausire had followed to the letter the advice of the blue domino; he had repaired at once to his academy, as it was called. The worthy friend of Oliva, tempted by the enormous sum of two millions, was greatly alarmed at his apparent exclusion by his companions, who had not communicated to him a scheme promising so great reward. He knew that the associates in the academy did not pride themselves on being scrupulous, which in itself was a reason for haste, since the absent are always at a disadvantage, and especially so if their absence affords to others a chance for gain.

Beausire had acquired among his associates the reputation of a man to be feared. This was neither difficult nor astonishing. He had been a police officer and had worn a uniform. He knew how to draw his sword, and he had a habit of looking very fierce at the slightest word that displeased him, — all which appears rather terrifying to those of doubtful courage, especially when they have reason to shun the notoriety of a duel and the curiosity of the police. Beausire, then, calculated on avenging himself for the contempt with which they had treated him, by frightening his associates in the gaming-house of the Rue du Pot-de-Fer.

It was a long distance from the gate Saint Martin to the Church Saint Sulpice. But Beausire was rich; he jumped into a carriage and promised the driver an extra fare.

The horses started off at a rapid pace. Beausire, having

no hat and no sword, since he wore a domino, assumed an expression of ferocity, sufficient to alarm any belated passer-by. His entrance into the academy produced quite a sensation.

There were in the first salon about twenty players, who were drinking beer or syrups, and smiling upon seven or eight women horribly rouged, who were looking on at the game.

They were playing faro at the principal table; the stakes were low, and the excitement small in proportion.

On the arrival of the domino, who shook his hood and moved his arms about underneath his dress, some women began to titter, half mockingly and half coquettishly. Monsieur de Beausire was a favorite, and the ladies never ill-treated him. Meantime he advanced as if he had neither heard nor seen anything, and when he had reached the table, he awaited in silence some remark upon his ill-humor.

One of the players — an old financier of doubtful character, a fellow apparently good-natured — said to him, "*Corbleu!* Chevalier, you come from the ball looking out of sorts."

"That is true," said the ladies.

"Does your domino hurt your head?" said another.

"It is not my domino that hurts me," replied Beausire, harshly.

"Oh!" said the banker, who had just raked toward him a dozen louis, "Monsieur le Chevalier de Beausire has been unfaithful to us; do you not see that he has been to the Opera-ball, and that in that neighborhood he has played for a heavy stake and has lost it?"

Every one laughed at or pitied him, according to their dispositions; the women had compassion for him.

"It is not true that I have been unfaithful to my

friends," replied Beausire; "I am incapable of infidelity! It is well for certain persons of my acquaintance to be guilty of infidelity toward their friends;" and to give more weight to his words he had recourse to the gesture of striking his hat down over his head. But unfortunately he merely flattened his silk hood, and thus gave it a ridiculous width, producing a very ludicrous effect instead of the serious one he had intended.

"What do you mean, dear Chevalier?" asked two or three of his associates.

"I know what I mean," replied Beausire.

"But that is not enough for us," said the good-natured old man.

"That does not concern you, Monsieur," retorted Beausire, unwisely.

A very expressive glance from the banker warned him that his remark was indiscreet. Indeed, it was necessary in this assembly not to make any distinction between those who paid and those who pocketed the money.

Beausire understood the glance, but his blood was up; those who are really brave control themselves more easily than those who pretend to be courageous.

"I thought I had friends here," he said.

"Why, certainly," replied several voices.

"Well, I was deceived!"

"In what?"

"In this: that many things are done without me."

Another sign from the banker; new protestations from the others.

"It is enough that I know," said Beausire, "and the false friends shall be punished."

He put his hand to his side to feel for his sword, but only touched his pocket, which, being full of louis, yielded a sound which betrayed him.

"Oh, oh!" cried two ladies, "Monsieur de Beausire is well off to-night!"

"Yes, it seems so," said the banker, slyly; "it seems that if he has lost, he has not lost everything; and that if he has been unfaithful to us, it is an infidelity which can be atoned for. Come, put up something, dear Chevalier."

"I thank you!" said Beausire, dryly; "if every one else keeps what he has, I will keep what I have."

"What the devil do you mean?" whispered one of the players.

"We will have an explanation, presently."

"Play then," said the banker.

"Just one louis," said a lady, caressing Beausire's shoulder in order to get as near as possible to his pocket.

"I only play for millions," said Beausire, boldly; "and really I cannot conceive how people can play here for paltry louis. Millions! Come, gentlemen of the Pot-de-Fer, since there is a secret scheme a-foot for gaining millions, have done with pitiable stakes of a louis! Millions, millionnaires!"

Beausire had reached that moment of excitement when a man over-steps the bounds of common-sense. An intoxication more dangerous than that of wine excited him. Suddenly he received from behind a kick on the legs so violent as to make him pause and turn round; he saw by his side a broad, olive-colored face, stiff and rough, with black eyes as luminous as burning coals. To Beausire's gesture of anger, this strange personage replied with a ceremonious bow and a stare as long as a rapier.

"The Portuguese!" said Beausire, astounded at this salutation from a man who had just kicked him.

"The Portuguese!" repeated the ladies, who abandoned Beausire to flutter round the stranger.

This Portuguese was the pet of these ladies, to whom, on the pretext that he did not speak French, he was in the habit of bringing confectionery, sometimes wrapped up in bank-notes of fifty or sixty francs.

Beausire knew that this Portuguese was one of the partners. He always lost his money with the frequenters of the gaming-house. He fixed the amount of his stakes at a hundred louis a week, and these were always lost. He was the decoy of the society. While he allowed himself to be plucked of a hundred golden feathers, the other associates stripped the players thus entrapped. The Portuguese was therefore regarded by the associates as a useful man, and by the frequenters of the place as an agreeable man. Beausire had for him that tacit respect which is always inspired by what is mysterious, even when it inspires some distrust also. Beausire, therefore, on receiving the kick of the Portuguese, became silent and sat down.

The Portuguese took his place at the table, and put down twenty louis, which in about fifteen minutes had all passed into the hands of the other players. The clock struck three. Two servants entered. The banker dropped his money through a hole in the table, for the by-laws of the association were conformed to the degree of confidence which the members had in one another, and did not permit to any one member exclusive control of the common funds. They even provided that the banker should not wear long sleeves, or carry any money about him, — provisions designed to prevent his hiding money in his sleeve, and to reserve to the company the right to search his pockets and take from him whatever money was found.

The lackeys brought in cloaks, overcoats and swords. Some of the fortunate players offered their arms to the ladies; the unlucky ones squeezed themselves into sedan-

chairs, still in use in those quiet parts of the town, and the lights in the gambling-room were extinguished.

Beausire also had put on his domino as if to go out; but he did not leave the house, and as soon as the door was closed upon those departing, he returned and entered the salon where eleven of the associates had already assembled. "At last," said he, "we will have an explanation."

"Light your lamp, and do not speak so loud," said the Portuguese, in good French.

Beausire muttered a few words to which no one paid any attention; the Portuguese seated himself in the banker's place. Then they examined the doors and windows to make certain that all was secure, drew the curtain close, and seated themselves.

"I have a communication to make," said the Portuguese; "fortunately, I arrived in good time; for Monsieur Beausire was seized this evening with a most imprudent flow of eloquence."

Beausire tried to speak.

"Silence," said the Portuguese; "let us not waste time in talk. You have uttered words which were more than imprudent. You had become aware of my plan; that is all very good. You are a man of talent and may have guessed it; but it seems to me that vanity should not predominate over interest."

"I do not understand," said Beausire.

"We do not understand," said the respectable assembly.

"Yes; Monsieur de Beausire hoped to be the first to make this proposition."

"What proposition?" cried the rest.

"Concerning the two million francs!" said Beausire, with emphasis.

"Two million francs!" they cried.

"First," said the Portuguese, "you exaggerate; it is not as much as that. I will instantly prove it."

"We do not know of what you are talking," said the banker.

"But are not the less interested," said another.

"Speak first," said Beausire.

"Gladly," returned the Portuguese; and he turned out a large glass of Orgeat which he drank quietly, retaining all the time his cool manner. "You must know, then," he said — "I am not speaking for Monsieur de Beausire's information — that the necklace is not worth more than fifteen hundred thousand francs."

"Oh, then it concerns a necklace?" said Beausire.

"Yes; did you not mean the same thing?"

"Perhaps."

"Now he is going to be discreet after his former folly," and the Portuguese shrugged his shoulders.

"I see with regret that you are taking a tone which displeases me," said Beausire, with the manner of a cock getting ready to fight.

"Mira! Mira!" said the Portuguese, cold as marble; "when I have done you may say what you please; but time presses, and the ambassador will arrive in eight days."

"This matter becomes complicated," said the banker; "a necklace, fifteen hundred thousand francs, and an ambassador! What does all this mean?"

"Here is the whole thing in a nutshell," said the Portuguese: "Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange offered to the queen a diamond necklace worth fifteen hundred thousand francs. She refused it, and now they do not know what to do with it; for none but a royal fortune could buy it. Well, I have found the royal personage who will buy this necklace, and drag it forth from the iron chest of Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange."

"It is —"

"It is my gracious sovereign the queen of Portugal," and he looked very important.

"We understand it less than ever," said the associates.

"And I not at all," thought Beausire; then he said aloud, "Explain yourself clearly, dear Monsieur Manoel; our private differences should give place to the public interests. I acknowledge you the author of the idea, and renounce all claim to its paternity; but for God's sake, speak out!"

"That is as it should be," said Manoel, drinking a second glass of Orgeat.

"We are already assured that there exists a necklace worth fifteen hundred thousand francs," said the banker. "That is an important point."

"And this necklace is in the strong-box of Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange. That is the second point," said Beausire.

"But Don Manoel said that her Majesty the queen of Portugal would buy the necklace. That is what baffles us."

"Nothing can be clearer, however," said the Portuguese. "All you have to do is to pay attention to my words. The embassy is just now vacant. The new ambassador Monsieur de Souza will arrive in eight days, perhaps sooner."

"Good!" said Beausire.

"And what is there to prevent this ambassador, eager to see Paris, from arriving and establishing himself before that time?"

The partners looked at one another, gaping in wonder.

"Do you not understand," said Beausire, "that Don Manoel means that the ambassador who will arrive may be, perhaps, a false one?"

"Exactly," added the Portuguese. "If the ambassador who shall present himself wishes to purchase the necklace for her Majesty the queen of Portugal, has he not the right?"

"Of course he has," said the company.

"And then he negotiates with Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange. That is all."

"Nothing more?"

"Only, that after having negotiated, it will be necessary to pay," observed the banker.

"Certainly; yes," replied the Portuguese.

"Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange will not give the necklace into the hands of an ambassador, even if it were the real Souza, without good security."

"Oh, I have thought of all that!" said the future ambassador.

"And what is your plan?"

"The embassy, as we have said, is now vacant."

"Yes."

"The only person there is a chancellor, a worthy Frenchman who speaks Portuguese as badly as possible, and who is delighted when the Portuguese speak to him in French, because in that language he is at home, and delighted also when Frenchmen speak Portuguese to him, because it is a compliment to his knowledge."

"Well?" said Beausire.

"Well, gentlemen, we will present ourselves to this worthy man with all the appearances of the new legation."

"Appearances are good," said Beausire, "but credentials are much better."

"We shall have them," replied Manoel.

"No one can deny that Don Manoel is an invaluable man," said Beausire.

"Our appearance and our credentials having convinced the chancellor as to the identity of the legation, we will establish ourselves at the embassy."

"Oh, oh, it is bold!" interrupted Beausire.

"It is necessary," continued the Portuguese.

"It is very simple," affirmed the other partners.

"But the chancellor?" objected Beausire.

"We have agreed that he will be convinced."

"If he should become less credulous, ten minutes before he began to doubt, he would be dismissed. I believe that an ambassador has a right to change his chancellor."

"Certainly."

"Then, when we are masters of the hôtel, our first step will be to wait on Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange."

"But you forget one thing," said Beausire; "our first act should be to ask an audience of the king, and there we should break down. The famous Riza Bey, who was presented to Louis XIV. as ambassador from the Shah of Persia, spoke Persian at least, and there were no scholars here capable of discovering how well he spoke it; but we should be found out at once. We should be told directly that our Portuguese was remarkably French, and we should be sent to the Bastille."

"We will escape this danger by remaining quietly at home."

"Then Monsieur Boehmer will not believe in our ambassadorship."

"Monsieur Boehmer will be told that we have come to France merely to buy the necklace. We will show him our order to do this, as we shall before have shown it to the chancellor; only we must try to avoid showing it to the ministers, for they are suspicious, and might find a multitude of little flaws."

"Oh, yes!" cried they all, "let us avoid the ministers."

"But if Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange require money on account?" asked Beausire.

"That would complicate the affair," said the Portuguese, somewhat embarrassed.

"For," continued Beausire, "it is usual for an ambassador to have letters of credit, at least, if not ready money; and here we should fail."

"You find plenty of reasons why the enterprise should fail," said Manoel; "but nothing to make it succeed."

"It is because I wish it to succeed that I speak of the difficulties. But stop; a thought strikes me."

All the heads approached in a circle.

"Every ambassador has a strong-box."

"Yes; a strong-box and a credit."

"We will not speak of credit, for there is nothing so hard to procure," said Beausire. "To obtain credit, one must have horses, carriages, servants, and everything of that sort. Let us consider the strong-box. What do you know of the one belonging to the Portuguese embassy?"

"I have always regarded her Majesty as a magnificent queen. She has probably seen that everything is arranged properly."

"That is for us to verify; but supposing the strong-box to be empty?"

"As is possible," said the others, laughing.

"Well, if it be, we must ask Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange who are their correspondents at Lisbon, and we will sign and stamp for them letters of credit for the sum demanded."

"That will do," said Manoel, majestically. "I was engrossed with the grand idea, but had not sufficiently considered the details."

"Which are exquisite," said the banker, licking his lips.

"Now, let us think of arranging the parts," said Beausire. "Don Manoel will be ambassador."

"Certainly," they all said.

"And Monsieur Beausire my secretary and interpreter," said Manoel.

"Why so?" said Beausire, rather uneasily.

"I am Monsieur de Souza, and must not speak a word of French; for I know that that gentleman when he talks, which is very seldom, speaks nothing but Portuguese. You, on the contrary, Monsieur, who have travelled, who are familiar with Parisian customs, who speak Portuguese also —"

"Very badly," said Beausire.

"Well enough not to be taken for a Parisian; and then, you know," added Don Manoel, fixing his black eyes on Beausire, "the most useful agents will have the largest shares."

"Assuredly," said the others.

"Well, it is agreed, — I am secretary and interpreter."

"Let us settle this at once," interrupted the banker; "how shall we divide the profits?"

"It shall be divided into twelve parts; but I, as ambassador and author of the scheme, shall have a share and a half; Monsieur Beausire the same, as interpreter and because he partly shared my idea, and talked of millions on arriving here."

Beausire gave a sign of approval.

"Finally," said the Portuguese, "a share and a half to him who sells the jewels."

"Oh," said the others, in one voice, "he should have only half a share!"

"And why?" said Don Manoel, in surprise; "it seems to me that he will run a great deal of risk."

"Yes; but he will have a bonus, a premium, and

allowances, which will net him an enormous share," said the banker.

At this everybody laughed; these honest people understood one another wonderfully.

"So far, then, it is settled; we will arrange the minor details to-morrow, for it is very late," said Beausire, who was thinking of Oliva, left at the ball with the blue domino, in whom, in spite of his readiness to give away louis d'or, he did not feel implicit confidence.

"No, no; we will finish at once," said the others. "What is to be prepared?"

"A travelling-carriage, with the arms of Monsieur de Souza," said Beausire.

"That would take too long to paint and to dry," said Manoel.

"Then we must say that the ambassador's carriage broke down on the way, and that he was forced to use the secretary's."

"Have you a carriage, then?" asked the Portuguese.

"I shall have the first one I can find."

"But your arms?"

"Whatever may be on it."

"Oh, that simplifies everything. It must be dirty,—splashes of mud on the panels and on the back and all about the crest, so that the chancellor will see nothing but mud."

"But the rest of the embassy?" asked the banker.

"We will arrive in the evening," said Beausire; "it is the best time for a first entrance; and you shall all follow next day, when we have prepared the way."

"Very well."

"But every ambassador, besides a secretary, must have a valet, who will occupy a delicate position!" said Don Manoel.

"You, Captain," said the banker, addressing one of the sharpers, — "you will take the part of valet."

The captain bowed.

"And the money for the purchases?" said Manoel; "I have nothing."

"I have a little," said Beausire; "but it belongs to my mistress."

"What have we in our fund?" asked the members.

"Your keys, gentlemen," said the banker.

Each drew out a key which opened one of twelve locks; these locks secured the drawer under the table in such a manner that none of these honest associates could open it except in the presence of all the others. They proceeded to examine its contents.

"One hundred and ninety-eight louis, besides the reserve fund," said the banker.

"Give them to Monsieur de Beausire and to me; it is not too much," said Manoel.

"Give us two thirds and leave the other third for the rest of the embassy," said Beausire, with a generosity which won all their hearts.

Don Manoel and Beausire received, therefore, one hundred and thirty-two louis, and sixty-six remained for the others. They then separated, after appointing a rendezvous for the next day.

Beausire rolled up his domino under his arm and hastened to the Rue Dauphine, where he hoped to find Oliva in possession of additional louis d'or.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE AMBASSADOR.

On the evening of the next day a travelling-carriage passed through the Barrière d'Enfer, so covered with dust and mud that no one could discern the arms upon it. The four horses that drew it almost flew over the pavement; the postilions were driving at the pace of a prince, as the saying is. The carriage stopped before a hôtel of handsome appearance in the Rue de la Jussienne, at the door of which two men were waiting, one of whom was in full dress, and the other in the livery usually worn by officers connected with foreign embassies in Paris; in other words, the latter looked like a guard in his gala-costume. The carriage entered the court-yard of the hôtel, and the person first-mentioned respectfully approached the carriage-door and began, in somewhat tremulous tones, a speech in the Portuguese language.

"Who are you?" said a voice from the inside, speaking also in Portuguese, but with this difference, that he spoke the language perfectly.

"The unworthy chancellor of the embassy, your Excellency."

"Very well. How badly you speak our language, my dear chancellor; but where are we to alight?"

"Here, Monseigneur, here."

"This is a poor reception," said Don Manoel, who played the grand personage as he got out of the carriage, leaning on the arms of his secretary and valet.

"Your Excellency must pardon me," said the chancellor, "but the courier announcing your arrival reached the hôtel only at two o'clock to-day. I was absent on business of the legation, and when I returned found your Excellency's letter. I have had only time to have the rooms opened; the servants are now lighting them."

"Very good."

"It gives me great pleasure to see the illustrious person of our new ambassador."

"We desire to keep as quiet as possible," said Don Manoel, "until we receive further orders from Lisbon. But show me to my room, if you please, for I am dying with fatigue; my secretary will give you all necessary directions."

The chancellor bowed respectfully to Beausire, who cordially returned the salutation and said with ironical courtesy, "We will speak French, Monsieur; I think it will be easier for both of us."

"Yes," murmured the chancellor, "I shall be more at my ease; for I confess that my pronunciation — "

"Yes; I see," interrupted Beausire, coolly.

"I will take the liberty to say to you, Monsieur, as you seem so amiable, that I trust Monsieur de Souza will not be annoyed at my speaking Portuguese so badly."

"Oh, not at all, not at all, if you speak French well."

"I!" said the chancellor, joyfully; "I, a Parisian of the Rue Saint Honoré!"

"Indeed! that is delightful," said Beausire. "What is your name? Ducorneau, I believe?"

"Yes, Monsieur; an appropriate name, since it has a Spanish termination. It is very flattering to me that Monsieur knew my name."

"Oh, you are well known, — so well, that we did not bring with us a chancellor from Lisbon."

"I am very grateful, Monsieur; what a fortunate thing for me the nomination of Monsieur de Souza proves to be."

"But Monsieur is ringing, I believe."

"Let us go and see."

They found Manoel attired in a magnificent dressing-gown. Several boxes and dressing-cases of rich appearance were already unpacked and lying about. A large fire burned on the hearth.

"Enter, enter, Chancellor," said the ambassador, who had seated himself in a large cushioned arm-chair, in front of the fire.

"Will his Excellency be angry if I answer in French?"

"Oh, no; I am sure of it."

Monsieur Ducorneau therefore paid his compliments in French.

"Ah! why, this is convenient; you speak in French admirably, Monsieur du Corno."

"He takes me for a Portuguese," thought the chancellor, beside himself with joy; and he pressed Beausire's hand.

"Now," said Manoel, "can I have supper?"

"Certainly, your Excellency; the Palais Royal is only two steps from here, and I know an excellent caterer who will bring your Excellency a good supper in a very short time."

"As if it were for yourself, Monsieur du Corno."

"Yes, Monseigneur; and if your Excellency will permit me, I will add to it some bottles of wine from your own country, such as your Excellency can have found only at Oporto itself."

"Oh, our chancellor has a good cellar, then?" said Beausire, jokingly.

"It is my only luxury," replied he. And now, by the wax-lights, they could remark his rather red nose and puffed cheeks.

"Do as you please, Monsieur du Corno; bring your wine and take supper with us."

"Such an honor —"

"Oh, no formality; to-night I am only a traveller. I shall not begin to be ambassador till to-morrow; then we will talk of business."

"Monseigneur will permit me to arrange my toilet?"

"Oh, you are superb already," said Beausire.

"Yes, but this is only a reception-dress."

"Remain as you are, Monsieur, and give the time to expediting our supper."

Ducorneau, delighted, left the room to fulfil his orders. Then the three rogues, left alone in the bedroom, examined the situation.

"Does this chancellor sleep here?" said Manoel.

"No; the fellow has a good cellar, and I doubt not a pretty woman or a grisette somewhere or other. He is an old bachelor."

"And the porter?"

"We must get rid of him. I will see to that."

"And the other servants in the hôtel?"

"We must replace them to-morrow with our own friends."

"Who is in the kitchen department?"

"No one. The last ambassador did not live here; he had a house in the town."

"What about the strong-box?"

"Oh, on that point, we must consult the chancellor; it is a delicate matter."

"I charge myself with it," said Beausire; "we are already capital friends."

"Hush! here he comes."

Ducorneau entered quite out of breath. He had ordered the supper; he brought six bottles of very respectable appearance from his cellar, and his face was radiant with pleasing anticipation. "Will your Excellency descend to the dining-room?" said he.

"No; we will take supper here sociably by the fire."

"Monseigneur fills me with joy. Here is the wine."

"Sit down, Monsieur du Corno," said the ambassador, "my valet will wait upon us. What day did the last despatches arrive?"

"The evening before the departure of your Excellency's predecessor."

"Are the affairs of the embassy in good order?"

"Oh, yes, Monseigneur."

"No money difficulties; no debts?"

"Not that I know of."

"Because if there are, we must begin by paying them. My predecessor is a worthy man, for whom I would become guarantee."

"Oh, your Excellency will have nothing of that sort to do. All the accounts were settled three weeks ago; and the day after the departure of the late ambassador one hundred thousand francs arrived here."

"One hundred thousand francs?" exclaimed both Don Manoel and Beausire, transported with joy.

"Yes, in gold."

"In gold!" repeated the ambassador, the secretary, and even the valet.

"So," said Beausire, concealing his emotion, "the box contains—"

"One hundred thousand three hundred and twenty-eight francs, Monsieur."

"It is not much," said Don Manoel, coldly: "but

happily, her Majesty has placed funds at my disposal. I told you," he continued, turning to Beausire, "that I thought we should need it at Paris."

"Your Excellency took wise precautions," said Beausire, respectfully.

After this important communication of the chancellor the hilarity of the party went on increasing. A good supper, consisting of salmon, crabs, game, and roast meats, contributed to their satisfaction. Ducorneau, quite at his ease, ate enough for ten, and demonstrated to his superiors that a Parisian could do honor to port and sherry.

Monsieur Ducorneau was still blessing Heaven for sending him an ambassador who preferred the French language to the Portuguese, and Portuguese wines to French; he was revelling in that state of bliss which a satisfied and grateful stomach communicates to the brain, when Monsieur de Souza told him that it was time to go to bed. He arose and bowed himself out, hitting everything in his way until he reached the street-door.

Beausire and Don Manoel had not done such honor to the wine as to be ready at once to retire to bed. Besides, the valet must now follow the example of his masters by taking his supper.

Arrangements for the next day were then made; and the three associates made a tour of examination through the hôtel, after having assured themselves that the guard was asleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BOEHMER AND BOSSANGE.

THE next morning the embassy, thanks to the activity of the hungry Ducorneau, was aroused from its lethargy. Drawers, paper-boxes, desks, horses pawing in the court-yard, indicated bustle and life where the day before everything had seemed listless and dead.

The report spread quickly in the neighborhood that a grand personage had arrived from Portugal during the night. This rumor which ought to have been a credit to our three rascals could not but inspire them with alarm; for the police of Monsieur Crosne had quick ears and Argus eyes. Still they thought that by audacity, combined with prudence, they might easily keep the police from becoming suspicious until they had had time to complete their business.

At daylight, two hired chaises brought to the hôtel a cargo of nine rascals who were to compose the household of the embassy. They were soon installed or rather disposed of by Beausire. One was appointed to the cash department, another was made keeper of the archives, a third took the place of the porter, whom Ducorneau himself dismissed on the ground that he did not speak Portuguese. The hôtel was therefore peopled by this new garrison, whose duty it was to defend it from everything profane.

The police is profane in the highest degree to all those who have political or other secrets.

happily, her Majesty has placed funds at my disposal. I told you," he continued, turning to Beausire, "that I thought we should need it at Paris."

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Toward noon Don Manoel, called Souza, handsomely dressed, entered a very decent carriage which Beausire had hired for five hundred francs a month. He drove to the house of Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange, accompanied by his secretary and his valet.

The chancellor had orders to settle no accounts except with the knowledge of the secretary. The conspirators wished to keep intact the sum of one hundred thousand francs, — the fundamental pivot of the whole scheme.

The ambassador learned that the jewellers of the crown lived on the Quai de l'École. Thither they took their course, and arrived about one o'clock. The valet knocked at the door, which was secured with immense locks, and studded with large-headed nails, like the door of a prison. These nails were arranged in such a way as to form designs more or less agreeable to the eye, and so that no gimlet, saw, or file could touch a particle of the wood without being damaged by encountering a piece of iron.

A latticed wicket was opened, and a voice asked the valet what he wanted.

"His Excellency the Ambassador of Portugal desires to speak to Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange," replied the valet.

A face quickly appeared at the window of the first story, then a hurried step was heard upon the stairs. The door opened.

Don Manoel alighted from the carriage with dignified deliberation, Monsieur de Beausire having first descended to assist his Excellency.

The man who advanced to meet the two Portuguese with so much haste, on hearing the word "ambassador," was Monsieur Boehmer himself, who made all sorts of apologies while they were ascending the stairs.

Monsieur Beausire observed that behind them a strong

woman-servant was fastening the bolts and locks. Monsieur Boehmer, seeing that Beausire's attention was attracted in that direction, said: "Your pardon, Monsieur; we are so exposed in our unfortunate business that we are obliged to take every precaution."

Don Manoel remained impassive, seeing which Boehmer repeated to him the remark which Beausire had received with an affable smile, but the ambassador was as silent as before.

"Your Excellency will pardon me," again said Boehmer, disconcerted.

"His Excellency does not speak French," said Beausire, "and does not understand you, Monsieur; you must communicate with him through me,—unless you speak Portuguese."

"No, Monsieur; I do not."

"I will speak for you, then."

Beausire spoke a few Portuguese words to Manoel, who replied in the same language.

"His Excellency Monsieur le Comte de Souza, ambassador from the queen of Portugal, graciously accepts your apologies, Monsieur, and desires me to ask you if you still have in your possession a beautiful diamond necklace?"

Boehmer looked at him scrutinizingly. Beausire met the look with the coolness of a diplomatist.

"A beautiful diamond necklace," said Boehmer, slowly, —"a very beautiful necklace?"

"The one which you offered to the queen of France; its renown has reached our gracious queen."

"Monsieur," said Boehmer, "is an officer of the ambassador?"

"His private secretary, Monsieur."

Don Manoel, with the air of a great personage, had seated himself, and was looking carelessly at the pictures which hung round the room.

"Monsieur," said Beausire, "it seems to me that you have not heard a word that I have said to you."

"And how so, Monsieur?" replied Boehmer, a little startled by the sharp tone of the secretary.

"I see his Excellency is becoming impatient."

"Excuse me, Monsieur," said Boehmer, coloring, "but I cannot show the necklace except in the presence of my partner, Monsieur Bossange."

"Well, Monsieur, call your partner."

Don Manoel approached Beausire, and with a freezing manner, somewhat majestic withal, began a harangue in Portuguese, during which Beausire many times bowed respectfully. Then Manoel turned his back, and gazed out of the window.

"His Excellency says, Monsieur, that he has already waited ten minutes, and that he is not accustomed to be kept waiting, not even by kings."

Boehmer bowed and rang the bell.

A moment later another person entered the room. It was Monsieur Bossange the partner. Boehmer explained the matter to him in a few words. Bossange gave a glance to the two Portuguese, and asked Boehmer for his key to the safe.

"It seems to me that honest men," thought Beausire, "take as many precautions toward one another as if they were thieves."

Ten minutes later Monsieur Bossange returned, carrying in his left hand a jewel-case; his right hand was hidden under his coat. Beausire saw the outline of two pistols.

"However respectable we may appear," said Manoel, gravely, in Portuguese, "these gentlemen evidently take us for thieves, rather than ambassadors." And he looked narrowly at the two jewellers to discover by any indication of emotion whether they understood the Portuguese

language. But he saw nothing, — nothing but a diamond necklace of dazzling beauty.

Monsieur Bossange advanced, and with much apparent confidence put the casket into Manoel's hands. Manoel opened it, and immediately said angrily, to his secretary, "Monsieur, say to these fellows that they exceed the shopkeeper's privilege of stupidity. I ask for a diamond necklace, and they bring me paste. Tell them I will complain to the ministers, and in the name of my queen will have thrown into the Bastille impertinent fellows who play tricks upon an ambassador;" and he threw down the case in such a passion that the jewellers needed no interpretation of his remarks. They apologized effusively, and explained that in France it was usual to show only the models of diamonds, so as not to tempt people to robbery, were they so inclined.

Manoel, with an angry gesture, walked toward the door.

"His Excellency desires me to tell you," said Beausire, "that he is sorry that people like Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange, jewellers to the queen, should not know better how to distinguish an ambassador from a rogue, and that he will return to his hôtel."

The jewellers looked at each other with decided uneasiness, and bowed humbly to the retiring ambassador. Beausire proudly followed his master. The old woman unfastened the door.

"To the hôtel of the embassy, Rue de la Jussienne!" cried Beausire to the coachman.

Boehmer, listening at the wicket, heard the order.

"A complete failure!" muttered Manoel.

"A complete success!" said Beausire. "In an hour these men will follow us."

The carriage rolled away as rapidly as if it had been drawn by eight horses.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT THE EMBASSY.

On returning to their hôtel, these gentlemen found Ducorneau dining quietly in his office. Beausire desired him, when he had finished, to go up and see the ambassador, and added, "You will see, my dear Chancellor, that Monsieur de Souza is not an ordinary man."

"I have perceived that already."

"His Excellency," continued Beausire, "wishes to take a distinguished position in Paris, and this residence will be insupportable to him. It will therefore be necessary to find a private residence for Monsieur de Souza."

"That will complicate the diplomatic business," said Ducorneau, "we shall have to go so often to obtain his signature."

"His Excellency will give you a carriage, dear Monsieur Ducorneau."

"A carriage for me!"

"It is to be regretted that you have not one already," continued Beausire. "Every chancellor of a great ambassador should have a carriage; but we will talk of that afterward. His Excellency wishes to know where the strong-box is."

"Upstairs in his own room, Monsieur."

"So far from you?"

"For greater safety, Monsieur. Robbers would find greater difficulty in getting to it there, than here on the ground-floor."

"Robbers!" said Beausire, disdainfully, "and for such a little sum?"

"One hundred thousand francs!" said Ducorneau. "It is easy to see that Monsieur de Souza is very rich, there is not so much money in all the other embassies."

"Shall we examine it now?" said Beausire. "I am rather in a hurry to attend to my own business."

"Immediately, Monsieur."

They went up, and found the money as Ducorneau had stated. Ducorneau gave his key to Beausire, who kept it for some time, pretending to admire its ingenious construction, while he cleverly took the impression of it in wax. Then he gave it back, saying, "Keep it, Monsieur Ducorneau, it is better in your hands than in mine; let us now go to the ambassador."

They found Don Manoel drinking the national chocolate, and apparently much occupied with a writing in cipher.

"Do you understand the cipher used in the late correspondence?" said he to the chancellor.

"No, your Excellency."

"I wish you henceforth to understand it; it will save me a great many annoying details. By the way, what about the box?" said he to Beausire.

"In good condition, like everything else under the charge of Monsieur Ducorneau."

"The hundred thousand francs?"

"Intact."

"Well, sit down, Monsieur du Corno; I want you to give me some information."

"At your Excellency's orders," replied the chancellor, delighted.

"The matter in question is an affair of State."

"Oh, I listen, Monseigneur!" and he drew his chair nearer to the ambassador.

"A very grave affair, in which I would take advantage of your experience. Do you know any honest jewellers in Paris?"

"There are Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange, jewellers to the queen."

"But they are precisely the people I do not wish to employ; I have just left them, and will have nothing more to do with them."

"Have they had the misfortune to displease your Excellency?"

"Seriously, Monsieur du Corno."

"Oh, if I might be a little less reserved, I would venture —"

"Speak!"

"I would ask how these people, who bear so high a name —"

"They are perfect Jews, Monsieur du Corno; and their bad behavior will make them lose a million or two."

"Oh!" cried Ducorneau, eagerly.

"I was sent by her gracious Majesty to make an offer to them for a diamond necklace."

"Oh, the famous necklace which had been ordered by the late king for Madame Dubarry, — I know, I know!"

"You are a valuable man, Monsieur; you know everything. Well, I had intended to buy that necklace; but as things are I shall not buy it."

"Shall I interfere?"

"Monsieur du Corno!"

"Oh, only as a diplomatic affair."

"If you knew them at all, it might be well."

"Bossange is a distant relation of mine."

Don Manoel and Beausire looked at each other. A silence followed. The two Portuguese were sharpening their wits.

At this moment a valet opened the door, and announced "Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange." Don Manoel rose quickly, and said, in an angry tone, "Send those men away!"

The valet was about to obey.

"No; dismiss them yourself, Monsieur the Secretary," said the ambassador.

"In the name of Heaven, allow me to execute the order of Monseigneur!" said Ducorneau. "I will dismiss them gently, since it cannot be avoided."

"Certainly, if you wish," said Manoel, carelessly. Beausire approached him as Ducorneau hurried out.

"It seems that this affair is destined to fail," said Manoel.

"No; Ducorneau will arrange it."

"He will spoil it, you unlucky fellow! You said at the jewellers' that I did not understand French, and Ducorneau will let out that I do understand it."

"I will go," said Beausire.

"Perhaps that is equally dangerous."

"Oh, no! only leave me full power to act."

Beausire went down. Ducorneau had found the jewellers much more disposed to politeness and confidence since entering the hôtel; and on seeing an old friend, Bossange was delighted.

"You here?" said he; and he approached to embrace him.

"Ah, ah, you are very amiable to-day, my rich cousin!" said Ducorneau; "you recognize me here. Is it because I belong to the embassy?"

"On my word, yes!" said Bossange. "If we have been a little estranged, forgive, and render me a service."

"I came for that."

"Thanks! you are, then, attached to the embassy?"

"Yes."

"I want to make an inquiry."

"What about?"

"About this embassy."

"I am the chancellor."

"We would speak to the ambassador."

"I come on his behalf."

"On his behalf! to tell us —"

"That he begs you to leave his hôtel as quickly as possible."

The two jewellers looked at each other disconcerted.

"Because," continued Ducorneau, "it seems you have been uncivil to him."

"But listen —"

"It is useless," said Beausire, who suddenly appeared. "Monsieur Ducorneau, his Excellency told you to dismiss them; do it."

"But, Monsieur —"

"Obey!" said Beausire, with disdain. "Dismiss them!" and he went away.

The chancellor took his relation by the shoulder, and pushed him out, saying, "You have spoiled your fortune."

"*Mon Dieu!* how susceptible these foreigners are," murmured Boehmer, who was a German.

"When one is called Souza, and has nine hundred thousand francs a year, one has a right to be what he pleases," said Ducorneau.

"Ah," sighed Bossange, "I told you, Boehmer, you were too stiff in business matters!"

"Well," replied the obstinate German, "at least, if we do not get his money he will not get our necklace."

Ducorneau laughed. "You do not understand either a Portuguese or an ambassador, bourgeois that you are. I will tell you what they are: one ambassador, Monsieur de

Potemkin, bought every year for his queen, on the first of January, a basket of cherries, which cost one hundred thousand crowns, — one thousand francs a cherry. Well, Monsieur de Souza will buy up all the mines of Brazil, and will find a diamond as big as all yours put together. Though it may cost him an amount equal to his income for twenty years, what will he care for that? — he has no children. So!"

As Ducorneau was about to close the door, Bossange stopped him, saying, "Arrange this affair for me, and you shall have —"

"We are incorruptible here!" replied Ducorneau, and closed the door.

That evening the ambassador received the following letter: —

MONSEIGNEUR, — A man who awaits your orders, desiring to present to you our respectful apologies, is at the door of your hôtel; and upon a word from your Excellency, he will place in the hands of one of your attendants the necklace of which you did us the honor to speak to us. Be pleased to receive, Monseigneur, the assurance of our profound respect.

BOEHMER AND BOSSANGE.

"So," said Manoel, on reading this letter, "the necklace is ours."

"Not so," said Beausire; "it will be ours only when we have bought it. We must buy it, therefore."

"But how?"

"Your Excellency does not understand French, — that is settled; and so, first of all, we must get rid of the chancellor."

"How can we do that?"

"Oh, I will send him away on some diplomatic mission."

"You are wrong," said Manoel; "he will be our security with these men."

"But he will say that you know French."

"No, he will not; I will tell him not to do so."

"Very well, then, he can stay. Let the man with the diamonds come in."

The man was introduced. It was Boehmer himself, who made many bows and excuses; after which he presented his diamonds, and seemed to intend leaving them for examination.

Don Manoel desired him to remain.

"Sit down," said Beausire, "and let us converse, since his Excellency pardons you."

"Oh, how much trouble a man must take to make a sale!" sighed Boehmer.

"How much trouble a man takes to steal," thought Beausire.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BARGAIN.

Then the ambassador consented to examine the necklace in detail. Monsieur Boehmer showed each individual beauty.

"On the whole," said Beausire, interpreting for Manoel, "his Excellency sees nothing to complain of in the necklace; but there are ten of the diamonds slightly defective."

"Oh!" said Boehmer.

"His Excellency," interrupted Beausire, "knows more about diamonds than you do; the Portuguese nobility play with the diamonds of Brazil as children do here with glass beads."

In fact, Don Manoel placed his finger on some of the diamonds and showed, with great intelligence, faults which were almost imperceptible, and which even a connoisseur might have passed over without noticing.

"Such as it is, however," said Boehmer, somewhat surprised to find so great a nobleman a jeweller also, "this necklace is the finest collection of diamonds in all Europe."

"That is true," said Don Manoel.

Then Beausire went on, "Well, Monsieur Boehmer, her Majesty the queen of Portugal has heard of this necklace, and has given Monsieur de Souza a commission to buy it, if he should be satisfied as to the quality of the diamonds. He is satisfied; now what is the price?"

"Sixteen hundred thousand francs."

Beausire repeated this to the ambassador.

"It is one hundred thousand francs too much," replied Don Manoel.

"Monseigneur," replied the jeweller, "one cannot estimate profits with precision on an article so valuable as this. In getting together this collection it has been necessary to make voyages and researches that are almost beyond belief."

"One hundred thousand francs too dear," repeated the tenacious Portuguese.

"And if his Excellency says this," said Beausire, "it must be his firm conviction, for he never bargains."

Boehmer was shaken. Nothing reassures a suspicious merchant so much as a customer who haggles as to the price. "However," he said, after a minute's thought, "I cannot consent to a deduction which will make all the difference of loss or profit to myself and my partner."

Don Manoel, after hearing Beausire's interpretation, rose. Beausire returned the case to the jeweller.

"I will, however, speak to Monsieur Bossange about it," continued Boehmer. "I am to understand that his Excellency offers fifteen hundred thousand francs for the necklace?"

"His Excellency never retracts anything he has said; but he might refuse the necklace altogether rather than be subjected to the annoyance of bargaining for it."

"But, Monsieur, you understand that I must consult with my partner?"

"Certainly, Monsieur Boehmer."

"Certainly," replied Don Manoel, to whom Boehmer's question had been interpreted; "but I must have a speedy answer."

"Well, Monseigneur, if my partner will consent to that reduction in the price I also will consent."

"Good."

"It then only remains, besides obtaining the consent of Monsieur Bossange, to settle the mode of payment."

"There will be no difficulty about that," said Beausire. "How do you wish to be paid?"

"Oh," said Boehmer, laughing, "if ready money be possible —"

"What do you call ready money?" said Beausire, coldly.

"Oh, I know no one has a million and a half of francs ready to pay down," said Boehmer, with a sigh.

"It would be inconvenient, even for you, Monsieur Boehmer."

"Still, I cannot consent to dispense with some ready money."

"That is but reasonable." Then turning to Don Manoel, "How much will your Excellency pay down to Monsieur Boehmer?"

"One hundred thousand francs on signing the agreement."

Beausire repeated this.

"And the remainder?" asked Boehmer.

"At the expiration of the time necessary to transmit a draft signed by Monseigneur to Lisbon; unless you prefer to wait for information sent from Lisbon to Paris."

"Oh!" said Boehmer, "we have a correspondent in Lisbon; by writing to him —"

"The very thing," said Beausire, laughing ironically; "write to him; ask him if Monsieur de Souza is solvent, and whether her Majesty the queen can be trusted to the amount of fourteen hundred thousand francs."

"Monsieur —" said Boehmer, confused.

"Do you accept, or do you prefer other conditions?"

"Those which you at first proposed appear to me

acceptable. Would there be any fixed dates for the payments?"

"There would be three payments, Monsieur Boehmer, of five hundred thousand francs, and you might make that the object of a pleasant journey."

"A journey to Lisbon?"

"And why not? Is it not worth a little trouble to receive a million and a half within three months?"

"Oh, undoubtedly, but —"

"Moreover, you would travel at the expense of the embassy, and either the chancellor or myself would accompany you."

"I should take the diamonds with me?"

"Without any doubt, unless you would prefer to send the drafts from here, and allow the diamonds to go alone to Portugal."

"I do not know — I believe — that — the journey would be useful, and that —"

"That is also my opinion," said Beausire. "The signature would be made here. You would receive your one hundred thousand francs cash, you would sign the bill of sale, and you would carry the diamonds to her Majesty. What is the name of your correspondent?"

"Messieurs Nunez Balboa, Brothers."

Don Manoel raised his head. "They are my bankers," he said, smiling.

"They are his Excellency's bankers," said Beausire, smiling also.

Boehmer appeared radiant; every cloud had left his brow. He bowed as if to express thanks, at the same time taking leave. A sudden thought brought him back.

"What is it?" asked Beausire, with anxiety.

"Our bargain is made?" said Boehmer

"Yes."

"Except —"

"Except the consent of Monsieur Bossange, as we have agreed."

"Except another thing," added Boehmer.

"Ah! ah!"

"Monsieur, this is a delicate question, and the honor of the Portuguese name is too strong a sentiment for his Excellency not to understand my meaning."

"What a round-about way you take! To the point!"

"This is the point. The necklace has been offered to her Majesty the queen of France."

"Who has refused it; what then?"

"We cannot, Monsieur, let this necklace leave France forever without informing the queen; and our respect and loyalty demand that we should give the preference to her Majesty."

"It is right," said Don Manoel, with dignity. "I should wish a Portuguese merchant to express the same sentiments."

"I am very happy that his Excellency approves of my conduct. Then all is settled, subject only to the consent of Monsieur Bossange, and the definite refusal of her Majesty the queen of France. I ask three days to settle these two points."

"On our side," said Beausire, "one hundred thousand francs down, three drafts amounting in all to fourteen hundred thousand francs placed in your hands. The case of diamonds to be delivered to the chancellor of the embassy or to me, whichever shall accompany you to Lisbon, to the house of Messieurs Nunez Balboa, Brothers. The whole of the money to be paid in three months. Your travelling expenses to be paid."

"Yes, Monseigneur; yes, Monsieur," said Boehmer.

"Ah!" said Don Manoel, in Portuguese.

"What is it, then?" said Boehmer, uneasy in his turn, and coming back.

"As gratuity," said the ambassador, "a ring worth one thousand pistoles to be given by you to my secretary or to the chancellor of the embassy; in short, to the one who accompanies you to Lisbon, Monsieur."

"That is but too just, Monseigneur," murmured Boehmer; "and I had already in my own mind determined to do so."

Don Manoel dismissed the jeweller with a wave of his hand.

When the two partners were left alone, Don Manoel said angrily to Beausire, "Please to explain what the devil you mean by this journey to Portugal? Are you mad? Why not have the jewels here in exchange for our money?"

"You are too sure of yourself as to this part you are playing," replied Beausire. "You are not yet altogether Monsieur de Souza in the opinion of Monsieur Boehmer."

"Come now! do you think he would have made an agreement if he had suspected anything?"

"As you please. Perhaps he would not have entered into an agreement; but every man in possession of fifteen hundred thousand francs holds himself above all the ambassadors in the world; and every one who gives that value in exchange for pieces of paper, wishes first to know what the papers are worth."

"Then you mean to go to Portugal, — you who cannot speak Portuguese? I tell you, you are mad."

"Not in the least. You will go there yourself."

"Oh, no!" cried Don Manoel, "I have too many good reasons for not wishing to return to Portugal. No! no!"

"I tell you that Monsieur Boehmer would never have given up his diamonds for mere paper."

"Paper signed 'Souza'?"

"I said that he thought himself a real Souza!" cried Beausire, striking his hands together.

"I would rather hear you admit that the affair is a failure," said Don Manoel.

"Not the least in the world. Come here, Captain," said Beausire to the valet, who appeared on the threshold. "You know what we are talking about?"

"Yes."

"You heard me?"

"Certainly."

"Very well. Do you think I have committed a folly?"

"I am sure that you were a thousand times right."

"Explain why."

"Because Monsieur Boehmer would have kept continual watch over the hôtel of the embassy and over the ambassador himself."

"Well?" said Don Manoel.

"Well," replied Beausire, "having both his money and his diamonds by his side, he will have no suspicions; he will set out quietly for Portugal."

"But he will not arrive," said the valet. "Is not that what you mean, Monsieur le Chevalier de Beausire?"

"Ah, you are a lad of discernment," replied Oliva's lover.

"Explain your plan," said Manoel.

"About fifty leagues from Paris," said Beausire, "this clever fellow here will come and present two pistols at the heads of our postilions, will steal from us all we have, including the diamonds, and will leave Monsieur Boehmer half-dead with blows."

"Oh, I was not thinking of that exactly," said the valet; "I thought you would embark for Portugal."

"Well, what then?"

"Monsieur Boehmer, since he is a German, will like being at sea, and will walk frequently on the deck. One day he will make a misstep and fall over, and the necklace will be supposed to have gone with him into the sea. Why should not the sea swallow diamonds worth fifteen hundred thousand francs since it has kept so well the Spanish galleons?"

"Oh, I understand," said Manoel.

"That is fortunate," muttered Beausire.

"But," continued Don Manoel, "for stealing diamonds we should be sent to the Bastille; for making the jeweller look into the sea we should be hanged."

"Yes, but for stealing the diamonds we might be taken," said the captain; "while we should never for a single moment be suspected of drowning this man."

"Well, we will settle all this when the time comes," said Beausire. "In the mean time, to our respective parts. We must administer the affairs of the embassy like model Portuguese, so that it may be said of us: 'If they were not real ambassadors, they appeared to be.' That is always flattering. Let us wait the three days."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE JOURNALIST'S HOUSE.

In the Rue Montorgueil, at the end of a court-yard the entrance to which was closed by an iron gate, was a rather high and narrow house, protected from the noise of the street by massive shutters which gave it the appearance of a house in the country.

On the first floor of this house lived a journalist who had acquired some degree of notoriety. The ground-floor was used for the storage of old journals, which were there piled up after being duly labelled. The two upper stories were occupied by peaceable tenants, whose quiet was broken several times a year by noisy incidents occurring in the rooms of the journalist, — when he was visited by the police or was assailed by actors or other persons to whom he had given special offence.

When these incidents occurred the tenants of the house, which was known in the neighborhood as "la Grille," closed their windows on the side toward the street that they might hear more distinctly the cries of the journalist when receiving chastisement.

Sometimes the journalist, pursued by such assailants, would seek escape by way of the Rue des Vieux-Augustins through a door opening on a level with his chamber. A concealed door opened, then closed; the noise ceased; the man assailed had disappeared, and the assailants found themselves face to face with four fusileers of the French

guards, hastily summoned by an old woman in the service of the journalist.

Aside from scenes like this, the tranquillity of "la Grille" was proverbial.

Monsieur Reteau was accustomed to go out in the morning and take a turn on the quays, the public squares, and the boulevards. He observed whatever was ridiculous, whatever was vicious, took notes of what he found, sketched vivid illustrations, and published his portraitures in his next issue. His journal was issued once a week. That is to say, Reteau spent four days looking for subjects and preparing his articles, three days more in printing them, and had his journal ready for issue on the day of publication.

On the day after that on which the agreement with Monsieur Boehmer had been made, three days after the Opera-ball at which Mademoiselle Oliva had enjoyed so much pleasure, leaning on the arm of the blue domino, Monsieur Reteau, on rising at eight o'clock, received from the hands of his old servant a copy of the issue for that day, still fresh from the press. He hastened to read it, with the attentive interest a tender father shows in examining the merits or defects of his beloved son. When he had read it through, "Aldegonde," said he to the old woman, "this is a capital number; have you read it?"

"Not yet; my soup is not made."

"I am satisfied with this number," said the journalist.

"Yes," replied Aldegonde; "but do you know what they say in the printing-room?"

"What do they say?"

"That this time you will not escape the Bastille."

"Aldegonde," replied Reteau, calmly, "make me a good soup, and don't meddle with literature."

"Oh, always the same," returned the old woman, — "rash and imprudent."

"I will buy you some buckles with the profits of this number. Have many copies been sold yet?"

"No; and I fear my buckles will not be very brilliant if this state of things continues. Do you remember the number containing an article on Monsieur de Broglie? Before ten o'clock on that day we had sold a hundred copies."

"And I had retreated three times to the Rue des Vieux-Augustins," said Reteau. "Every noise put me into a fever; those military men are rough!"

"I had inferred," persisted Aldegonde, "that this number of to-day will not be so profitable as was that on Monsieur de Broglie."

"So be it; but at any rate I shall not have to run away so often, and can take my soup in peace. Do you know why, Aldegonde?"

"Faith, no, Monsieur."

"It is because, instead of attacking a man, I attack a body; instead of attacking a soldier, I attack a queen."

"The queen! Thank God!" murmured the old woman. "Fear nothing, then. If you have attacked the queen you will be borne in triumph; we shall sell all our copies, and I shall have my buckles."

"Some one is ringing," said Reteau.

The old woman hastened to the shop to receive the visitor. A moment later she returned triumphant. "A thousand copies!" she said, — "a thousand copies, all at once; there 's an order!"

"In what name?" asked Reteau, eagerly.

"I don't know."

"We must know; run and find out."

"Oh, there is time enough; it is no small matter to count and do up a thousand copies."

"Go at once, I tell you, and ask the valet. Is it a valet?"

"It is a messenger, an Auvergnese, with his pack."

"Good; ask him to whom he is to carry these numbers."

Aldegonde went with all speed. The wooden stairs creaked under her ponderous legs, and her loud voice was heard through the floor as she spoke to the messenger. He told her that he was to carry the copies to the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, to the house of the Comte de Cagliostro.

The journalist bounded with joy, and hastened downstairs to assist in the delivery of the papers. The thousand copies were soon heaped on the back of the Auvergnese, who departed bending beneath the weight.

Monsieur Reteau prepared to jot down some notes for his next number regarding the extraordinary success of this, and proposed to write a few lines on the generous nobleman who had bought the thousand copies. He was congratulating himself on having so fortunately made acquaintance with that nobleman, when another ring at the bell was heard.

"Another thousand copies," said Aldegonde, excited by the first success. "Ah, Monsieur, it is not surprising; since the article is about the Austrian, every one will join in the chorus."

"Silence! silence! Aldegonde, don't speak so loud. 'The Austrian!' — that is an offence which might indeed send me to the Bastille you talked about."

"Very well, tell me," said the old woman, sharply; "is she, or is she not, an Austrian?"

"It is a word to which we journalists have given currency, but is not to be used too freely."

There was another ring at the bell.

"Go and see, Aldegonde; I don't think it is any one to buy papers."

"Why do you say that?"

"I think I see a man with a gloomy countenance waiting at the gate."

Aldegonde went down to open the gate; meanwhile Reteau looked on, from his window, with an anxiety that may be easily understood. Aldegonde opened to a man plainly dressed, who asked if he could see the editor of the journal.

"What have you to say to him?" asked Aldegonde, somewhat distrustful; and she held the gate slightly open, ready to shut it at the first sign of danger.

The man rattled some crown-pieces in his pocket, and the sound expanded the old woman's heart. "I have come," he said, "to pay for the thousand copies of to-day's paper, taken in the name of the Comte de Cagliostro."

"Ah, if that is so, come in."

The man entered; but he had not yet closed the gate when another visitor, coming up behind him, — young, tall, and of fine appearance, — held back the gate, saying, "Pardon, Monsieur." Without asking further permission he glided in after the messenger sent by the Comte de Cagliostro.

Aldegonde, intent on gain, and fascinated by the sound of the crown-pieces, hastened on to her master. "Come, come!" she cried; "all goes well. Here are the five hundred francs for the thousand copies."

"Let us receive them nobly," said Reteau, with a grand air; and he draped himself in a somewhat pretentious dressing-gown, for which he was indebted to the munificence, or rather to the fears, of Madame Dugazon, from whom, after her adventure with Astley the equestrian, he had procured numerous presents of every kind.

The messenger of the Comte de Cagliostro went forward and counted out one hundred six-franc pieces, which he arranged in twelve piles. Reteau carefully counted them and examined their quality. Then he thanked the messenger, gave him a receipt, and while dismissing him with a pleasant smile, asked him about the health of the Comte de Cagliostro. The man thanked him as for a common civility, and was taking his departure when Reteau added: "Say to the count that I await his wishes, and that he may rest undisturbed; I know how to keep a secret."

"It is unnecessary," the man replied; "Monsieur le Comte is independent. He does n't believe in magnetism; he wishes to raise a laugh against Monsieur Mesmer, and gives currency to the adventure of the vat for his own amusement."

"Very good," murmured a voice from the doorway; "we will try to raise a laugh at the expense of Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro."

Monsieur Reteau beheld, advancing into his chamber, a person whose face seemed to him more gloomy than had that of the person he had noticed first. He was, as we have said, a man young and vigorous; but as to his fine appearance, Reteau was not of our opinion. To him the young man seemed to have a threatening expression in his eyes, and to conduct himself in a threatening manner. And in fact, the stranger's left hand rested on the hilt of his sword, and his right hand on the head of a cane.

"What can I do for you, Monsieur?" asked Reteau, with a certain tremulousness of utterance which always seized him on such occasions.

"Monsieur Reteau?" asked the unknown.

"That is my name."

"Who calls himself 'De Villette'?"

"I am he, Monsieur."

"Journalist?"

"I am a journalist."

"Author of this article," asked the unknown, coldly, drawing from his pocket a copy of the new number.

"I am, in fact, not its author," said Reteau, "but its publisher."

"Very well, that comes to exactly the same result; for if you have not had the courage to write the article, you have had the cowardice to allow its publication. I say 'cowardice,' because as a gentleman I wish to measure my words, even in this hole; but I do not thus give full expression to my thought. Were I to say what I think, I should say that he who wrote that article is infamous; he who published it is a scoundrel!"

"Monsieur!" said Reteau, turning pale.

"Ah, this is a wretched piece of business indeed!" continued the young man, with growing excitement; "but listen now, Monsieur, — everything in its turn; just now you received crowns, now you are to receive a caning."

"Oh!" cried Reteau, "we shall see about that."

"And what shall we see?" said the young man, in a sharp, military tone, advancing toward his adversary.

But this was by no means Reteau's first experience in affairs of this sort, and he was acquainted with the secrets of his house. He had only to turn around to find a door, open it, pass through, close it, and bar it, and so make it serve as a defence while he gained an adjacent room which opened into the Rue des Vieux-Augustins. Once there he would be safe; he would find there a small gate, which a turn of the key — and the key was always ready — would open, when he could escape by making good use of his legs.

But that was an unfortunate day for the poor journalist; for just when he put his hand on that key he perceived

another man, who seemed to him in his agitated state of mind a Hercules, and who, motionless, threatening, seemed to be waiting for his approach.

Reteau would have been glad to retrace his steps, but the young man with the cane, whom he had seen first, had burst through the door with a vigorous kick, had followed him, and now that he had stopped on seeing that other sentinel, also armed with sword and cane, had only to reach out his arm to lay hold on him. Reteau found himself, then, between two fires, — or rather, between two canes, — in an obscure court between his house and the gate opening into the street.

"Monsieur, I beg you to let me pass," said Reteau to the young man who guarded the gate.

"Monsieur," cried the young man in pursuit, "Monsieur, stop the rascal."

"Be content, Monsieur de Charny; he will not pass out," said the young man at the gate.

"Monsieur de Taverney, is it you?" cried Charny, — for it was he who had come first to Monsieur Reteau by way of the Rue Montorgueil.

On reading the paper that morning they had both conceived the same idea, for they had the same sentiment in their hearts; and without any communication with each other they had proceeded to put that idea into execution. Each of them, on perceiving the other, was affected by jealousy; for each discovered a rival in the man who had been actuated by sentiments identical with his own. It was therefore with a somewhat offensive accent that Monsieur de Charny uttered the words, "Monsieur de Taverney, is it you?"

"Myself," replied Philippe, in the same tone, and making a movement toward the suppliant journalist who had thrust his arms through between the bars of the gate;

"but it seems that I have come too late. Very well, I will be a spectator of the game, — unless you will have the kindness to open the gate for me."

"The game!" murmured the frightened journalist; "are you going to murder me, gentlemen?"

"Oh," said Charny, "that expression is too strong. No, Monsieur, we will not murder you; but we will question you, and then we will see. You allow me to do what I please with this man, do you not, Monsieur de Taverney?"

"Certainly, Monsieur," replied Philippe; "you have the right to precedence, since you arrived first."

"There, then, stick to the wall, and don't you stir," said Charny to Reteau, after thanking Taverney with a gesture. "You admit, then, my dear Monsieur, that you wrote and published that comic tale, as you call it, about the queen, which appeared this morning in your paper?"

"Monsieur, it is not against the queen."

"Ah, good! only that was wanting.'

"You are very patient, Monsieur," said Philippe, raging on the other side of the gate.

"Don't be alarmed," replied Charny; "the fellow will lose nothing by waiting."

"Yes," murmured Philippe; "but I also am waiting."

Charny made no reply, but turning to the unhappy Reteau, he said: "'Etteniotna' is 'Antoinette' reversed. Oh, don't lie about it, Monsieur. That would be so stupid and so base that instead of beating you or killing you in an orderly manner, I shall flay you alive. Answer, then, are you the sole author of that article?"

"I am not an informer," said Reteau, drawing himself up.

"Very well, that is as much as to say that there is an accomplice. It must be he who bought a thousand copies

of that diatribe, — the Comte de Cagliostro, whom you named a little while ago. So be it; the count will pay his share when you have paid yours. But as I have got hold of you first, you shall pay first," and he raised his cane.

"Monsieur, if I had a sword!" roared the journalist.

Charny lowered his cane. "Monsieur Philippe," said he, "lend your sword to this rascal, I beg of you."

"Oh, by no means. I do not lend an honest sword to a fellow like that. Here is my cane if yours is not enough; but I can't conscientiously do anything more either for him or for you."

"*Corbleu!* a cane?" said Reteau, exasperated. "Do you know, Monsieur, that I am a gentleman?"

"Then lend your sword to me," said Charny, "and my only course will be never to touch this one again." He threw down his own sword at Reteau's feet, who turned pale.

Philippe could make no further objection. He drew his sword from its sheath, and passed it through the gate to Charny. Charny received it, bowing his thanks. "Ah, you are a gentleman," said he, turning toward Reteau, — "you are a gentleman, and you write such infamous things about the queen of France! Well, then, pick up that sword, and prove yourself a gentleman."

But Reteau did not stir. He seemed to be as much afraid of the sword at his feet as he had been of the cane when it was raised for a moment over his head.

"*Mordieu!*" said Philippe, in disgust, "open this gate for me."

"Pardon, Monsieur," said Charny; "but you have agreed that this man belongs to me first."

"Then make haste to get through with him, for I am in a hurry to begin."

"I was obliged to exhaust all other means before resorting to this extreme measure," said Charny; "for I find that blows with a cane cost almost as much to the giver as to the receiver; but since the fellow decidedly prefers blows of a cane to thrusts of a sword, he shall be served according to his choice."

Hardly had these words been spoken when a cry from Reteau showed that Charny had suited the action to the word. Five or six blows, vigorously applied, each of which extorted a cry equivalent to the pain it inflicted, followed the first. These cries brought out the old servant; but Charny was as little disturbed by her cries as by those of her master. Meanwhile Philippe, placed like Adam outside of Paradise, bit his fingers, and jumped about like a bear who smells fresh meat before the bars of his cage.

At length Charny stopped, tired of beating; and Reteau threw himself down, tired of being pommelled.

"There!" said Philippe, "are you through, Monsieur?"

"Yes," said Charny.

"Well, then, now return to me my sword, which has been useless to you, and I beg of you, open the gate."

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" implored Reteau, who saw a defender in the man who had settled accounts with him.

"You understand that I can't leave the gentleman outside the gate?" said Charny; "I must open to him."

"Oh, it is a murder!" cried Reteau. "Come, kill me at once, and have it over."

"Oh, now be quiet!" said Charny. "I have no idea that the gentleman will even touch you."

"And you are right!" said Philippe, with sovereign contempt, as he entered the court. "He has been beaten, and justly; but as the legal maxim says, 'Non bis in idem.'

But there are copies of this edition still remaining, and it is important that they should be destroyed."

"Ah, that is true!" said Charny. "You see that two are better than one alone; I should, perhaps, have forgotten that. But by what chance were you at that gate, Monsieur de Taverney?"

"I will tell you," said Philippe. "I inquired in the neighborhood as to the habits of this scoundrel. I ascertained that he was wont to run away when closely pressed. Then I inquired as to his means of escape, and thought that if I should enter by the secret door, and close it after me, I should catch my fox in his hole. The same idea of vengeance occurred to you; but being in more haste than I, your information was less complete. You came in by the usual entrance, and he was escaping from you when, fortunately, you found me there."

"And I am glad it so turned out. Come, Monsieur de Taverney, this fellow will conduct us to his press."

"But my press is not here," said Reteau.

"A lie!" cried Charny, threateningly.

"No, no," said Philippe; "he is right. The type is already distributed; there remains only the printed edition. Now, the edition must be still complete, except for the thousand copies sold to Monsieur de Cagliostro."

"Then he shall tear up that edition before our eyes."

"He shall burn it, — that is the surest method of destruction;" and Philippe, determined on that mode of satisfaction, pushed Reteau before him in the direction of the shop.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW TWO FRIENDS BECOME ENEMIES.

In the mean time Aldegonde, having heard her master's cries, and finding the door locked, had gone to call the guard; but before she returned Philippe and Charny had had time to light a fire with the copies from the top of the pile. They were throwing in the rest, one after another, and had nearly completed the task, when the guard appeared followed by a crowd from the neighborhood. Happily, Monsieur Philippe and Charny knew Monsieur Reteau's secret exit, which he had so imprudently shown them; so that when they caught sight of the guard, they made their escape, carrying the key with them.

Then Reteau, once more at liberty, cried, "Help! murder! murder!" while Aldegonde, seeing the flames through the window, cried, "Fire! fire!"

The soldiers arrived; but finding that the young men had disappeared, and that the fire was nearly extinguished, they left Reteau to bathe his back with spirits of camphor, and withdrew to their guard-room. But the crowd, always more curious than the guard, lingered about until noon, hoping for a renewal of the scene of the morning.

When Taverney and Charny found themselves in the Rue des Vieux-Augustins, "Monsieur," said Charny, "now that we have finished that business, can I be of use to you in any way?"

"A thousand thanks, Monsieur! I was about to make you the same offer."

"Thank you; but I have private business, which will probably keep me in Paris most of the day."

"And I also, Monsieur."

"Permit me, then, to take leave of you. I am happy to have met you."

"Permit me to return the compliment, and to express also my sincere desire that this affair may terminate according to your wishes."

The two men bowed with smiling courtesy; but it was easy to see that this exchange of polite words proceeded only from the lips. On separating, they took opposite directions, Philippe ascending the street toward the boulevards, and Charny descending it toward the river; both turned round two or three times, until they lost sight of each other.

Charny, going in the direction of the river, hastened on toward the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles. As he approached it, his attention was attracted to the form of a young man who was ascending the Rue Saint Louis, whom, after a moment of doubt, he recognized as Philippe de Taverney. Philippe, by a different course, had reached the corner of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, where the two young men now found themselves face to face. They both stopped and looked at each other with eyes which on this occasion did not take the trouble to conceal their thoughts. Both had now also the same idea, — that of demanding satisfaction of the Comte de Cagliostro; and meeting there, neither could doubt the other's intention.

"Monsieur de Charny," said Philippe, "I left to you the seller, you should indeed have left to me the purchaser. I allowed you to strike with the cane, let me give the sword-thrusts."

"Monsieur," replied Charny, "you did me that favor because I had arrived first, and for no other reason."

"Yes; but here," said Taverney, "we arrive at the same time, and I tell you at once that I will make no concessions."

"And who says that I ask any, Monsieur? I will maintain my rights, that is all."

"And in your opinion, Monsieur de Charny, your right is—"

"To make Monsieur de Cagliostro burn the thousand copies which he purchased of that scoundrel."

"You will please remember, Monsieur, that it was I who first had the idea of burning those in the Rue Montorgueil."

"Well! you had them burned in the Rue Montorgueil, and I will have them torn up in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles."

"Monsieur, I am sorry to tell you that I very seriously wish to be the first to settle with Comte de Cagliostro."

"All that I can agree to, Monsieur, is to decide the matter by chance; I will throw up a louis, and he who wins shall take precedence."

"Thanks, Monsieur, but I am not generally lucky, and should probably lose;" and he stepped toward the door.

Charny stopped him. "One word, Monsieur, we will soon understand each other."

"Well, Monsieur," answered Philippe, turning back eagerly, for he noticed in Charny's tone an accent of menace which pleased him.

"Before asking satisfaction of Monsieur de Cagliostro, suppose we take a turn in the Bois de Boulogne. It will be out of our way, I know, but perhaps we can settle our dispute there. One of us will probably be left behind, and he who returns need not yield to any one."

"Really, Monsieur," said Philippe, "you anticipate my

own thoughts, — that will adjust everything; where shall we meet?"

"Well, if my society be not insupportable to you, we need not part. I ordered my carriage to wait for me in the Place Royale close by here."

"Then you will give me a seat?" said Philippe.

"Certainly, and with the greatest pleasure."

And the two young men, who at first sight had felt that they were rivals, and had become enemies at the first opportunity, now hastened toward the Place Royale where they perceived Charny's carriage. Before entering the carriage Charny wrote a few words on his tablets, which he asked his footman to leave at his hôtel in Paris.

Monsieur de Charny's horses were excellent, and in less than half an hour they reached the Bois de Boulogne. The weather was lovely, and the air was delightful; the fresh leaves were appearing on the trees, and the violets filled the place with their perfume.

"It is a fine day for our drive, is it not, Monsieur de Taverney?" said Charny.

"Beautiful, Monsieur."

"You may go," said Charny to his coachman, as they alighted.

"Are you not wrong, Monsieur, to send away your carriage? One of us may need it."

"No, Monsieur," replied Charny; "in such an affair as this, secrecy is the first thing to be considered; and once in the knowledge of a servant, by to-morrow all Paris might be talking about it."

"As you please, Monsieur; but the fellow who brought us here knows very well what is going on. These people know too well the habits of gentlemen to suppose when they take us to the Bois de Boulogne, and at the pace at which he brought us, that we come simply for a drive. So,

I repeat, your coachman knows what is going on. If he is not sure of it now, he may afterward see one of us wounded, and then he will have no doubt of it. Is it not better to keep him here to take back the one who may need help, than for either of us to be left here wounded and alone?"

"You are right, Monsieur," replied Charny. Then turning to the coachman, "Dauphin," he said, "stop, you may wait here."

Dauphin had expected to be recalled; he had driven very slowly and consequently was within hail. He therefore stopped; and as Philippe had foreseen, he suspected what was going forward. He placed himself so as to see, through the still leafless trees, everything that took place.

Philippe and Charny soon reached a spot which was near the centre of the wood. Philippe, who walked in front, found a dry place, and firm under-foot; it was an open place, well adapted to the purpose they had in view.

"With deference to your opinion, Monsieur de Charny," said Philippe, "it seems to me that this is a good place."

"Excellent, Monsieur," replied Charny, taking off his coat.

Philippe also took off his coat, threw down his hat, and drew his sword.

"Monsieur," said Charny, whose sword was still in the scabbard, "to any one but you I would say one word of kindness, if not of apology, and we should be friends again; but to you — a brave soldier who have just come from America, a country where they fight so well — I cannot —"

"And I, to any other," replied Philippe, "would say, 'Monsieur, in my relations toward you I am perhaps in the wrong;' but to you — to the brave sailor who lately received the admiration of the whole court for having per-

formed a glorious exploit in battle — to you, Monsieur de Charny, I can say nothing but this, 'Monsieur le Comte, do me the honor to draw your sword.'"

The count bowed, and in his turn drew his sword.

"Monsieur," said Charny, "I believe that neither of us has touched on the real cause of the quarrel."

"I do not understand you, Count," replied Philippe.

"Oh, on the contrary, you do understand me, Monsieur; and as you come from a country whose people know not how to lie, you blushed while saying that you did not understand me."

"Guard!" said Philippe.

Their swords crossed. At the first pass Philippe perceived that he had a marked superiority over his adversary. But this assurance, instead of increasing his ardor, appeared to chill it altogether, and he became as calm as if he were in a fencing academy, and instead of a sword were holding a foil in his hand. He contented himself with parrying and the combat had lasted more than a minute without his giving a single blow.

"You are sparing me, Monsieur," said Charny; "may I ask why?" And making a rapid feint, he lunged heavily at Philippe. But Philippe covered the sword of his adversary with a counter still more rapid than the feint, and the thrust was parried.

Although Taverney's parry had thrown Charny's sword out of line, Taverney did not thrust in return. Charny made another attack which Philippe again warded off by a simple parry; Charny was forced to recover himself rapidly.

Charny was the younger of the two, and the most ardent; he was mortified, feeling his own blood boil, by his antagonist's coolness. He wished to disturb this calmness.

"I told you, Monsieur, that we had not touched upon the real cause of the quarrel."

Philippe did not answer.

"I will now tell you the real cause; you sought a quarrel with me, — for the quarrel began with you, — you sought a quarrel with me from jealousy."

Philippe remained silent.

"Come now," said Charny, as angry now as Philippe was cool, "what game are you playing, Monsieur de Taverney? Is it your intention to tire my hand? That would be a plan unworthy of you. *Morbleu!* kill me if you can, but at least kill me in full combat."

Philippe shook his head. "Yes, Monsieur," he said, "your reproaches are deserved; I sought the quarrel and I regret it."

"That is not the question now, Monsieur. You have a sword in your hand; use it for something besides parrying, or if you will not more directly attack, do not defend yourself so well."

"Monsieur," replied Philippe, "I have the honor to tell you a second time that I was wrong, and that I regret it."

But Charny's blood was too hot to comprehend his adversary's generosity; he took offence at it. "Ah!" said he, "I understand; you wish to play the magnanimous with me! That is it, am I not right, Chevalier? This evening, or to-morrow morning, you calculate on telling some beautiful ladies that you came upon the ground with me, and that you spared my life."

"Monsieur le Comte," said Philippe, "I really fear that you are going mad."

"You wished to kill Monsieur de Cagliostro to please the queen; and more surely still to please the queen, you wish to kill me also, but by ridicule."

"Ah, that is a word too much," cried Philippe, knitting his brow; "and this word proves that your heart is not so generous as I thought."

"Well, pierce that heart, then!" said Charny, exposing his breast just as Philippe was making a rapid lunge.

The sword glanced along the ribs, and cut a bleeding seam under the fine white shirt.

"At last!" said Charny, joyfully, "I am wounded! Now if I kill you, mine will be the glorious part!"

"Decidedly," said Philippe, "you are quite mad, Monsieur. You will not kill me, and your part will be altogether inglorious; you will only be disabled without cause and without profit, for no one will ever know for what you have fought."

Charny gave a straightforward thrust, so rapidly that it was with difficulty that Philippe parried it in time; which he not only succeeded in doing, but sent Charny's sword flying ten paces away. Then rushing upon it he broke it under his heel.

"Monsieur de Charny," he said, "it was not necessary for you to prove to me that you were brave; you must therefore detest me very much when you fight with such fury."

Charny did not reply, he was growing pale. Philippe looked at him a few moments, expecting either an avowal or a denial on his part. "Come, Monsieur le Comte," he said, "the die is cast, — we are to be enemies."

Charny tottered. Philippe rushed forward to support him; but he repulsed him, saying, "I thank you, but I hope to be able to get to my carriage."

"Take this handkerchief, at least, to stop the bleeding."

"Willingly," and he took the handkerchief.

"And my arm, Monsieur; the slightest obstacle you

meet will throw you down, exhausted as you are, and a fall would cause you useless pain."

"The sword has only penetrated the flesh," said Charny; "I feel nothing in the chest."

"So much the better, Monsieur."

"And I hope soon to be quite well."

"So much the better again, Monsieur. But I warn you that you will find it difficult to make me your adversary again."

Charny tried to answer, but the words died on his lips; he tottered again, and Philippe had only time to catch him in his arms. He lifted him as if he were an infant and carried him half-fainting to his carriage. Dauphin, having seen all that had happened, advanced to meet his master. They put Charny into the carriage; he thanked Philippe by an inclination of the head.

"Drive with care, coachman," said Philippe.

"But you, Monsieur," murmured the wounded man.

"Oh, do not make yourself uneasy about me;" and bowing in his turn, he closed the carriage-door.

Philippe watched the carriage until it disappeared round the corner of an avenue, and then slowly took his way toward Paris. Then, turning round once more and perceiving the carriage, which, instead of returning to Paris as he was about to do, was proceeding in the direction of Versailles and was already disappearing among the trees, he uttered these words, torn from the depths of his heart, "She will pity him!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

PHILIPPE AND CAGLIOSTRO.

At the gate near the guard-house Philippe leaped into a coach which he found standing near.

"To the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles," he said to the coachman, "and quickly."

A man who has just fought a duel, and who has preserved the air of a conqueror; a man of vigorous form, whose figure proclaims the nobleman; a man dressed as a citizen, whose deportment indicates the military man, — was more than enough to stimulate the automedon, who started off at a rapid pace, and carried Philippe in a state of great excitement to the house of the Comte de Cagliostro.

The exterior of the hôtel was simple in architectural form and majestic in outline, like most of the buildings constructed in the time of Louis XIV. A large carriage, to which were attached two good horses, stood in the court-yard. The coachman was asleep on his box, wrapped in a great-coat lined with fox-skin; two footmen, one of whom wore a hunting-knife, silently paced up and down before the entrance. With this exception, there was no sign of life about the hôtel.

Philippe's coachman, having been ordered to enter, hailed the guard, who immediately threw open the massive gates. Philippe jumped out, ran up the steps, and addressing both the servants at once, "Does the Comte de Cagliostro live here?" he asked.

"He is just going out," said one of the footmen.

"The more reason, then, for haste, for I wish to speak to him before he goes out. Announce the Chevalier Philippe de Taverney;" and he followed the servant so quickly that they reached the salon at the same time.

"The Chevalier Philippe de Taverney!" repeated after the valet, a voice manly and sweet at the same time, "Show him in."

Philippe entered the room under the influence of a strange emotion which this calm voice had excited. "Excuse me, Monsieur!" he said to a man whom we have already seen, first, at the table of Monsieur de Richelieu, and later, at the exhibition of Monsieur Mesmer, in Oliva's apartment, and with her at the Opera-ball.

"For what, Monsieur?" he replied.

"Because I prevent you from going out."

"You would indeed have needed to excuse yourself had you been much later, for I was waiting for you."

Philippe knit his brows. "What! you were waiting for me?" he said.

"Yes; I was forewarned of your visit."

"You were forewarned of my visit?"

"Yes; two hours ago. It is about that time, is it not, since you were on your way here, when an interruption, independent of your will, caused you to postpone the execution of your project?"

Philippe began to experience the same strange sensations with which this man inspired every one.

"Sit down, Monsieur de Taverney," continued the count; "this arm-chair was placed for you."

"A truce to pleasantry, Monsieur!" said Philippe, in a voice which he vainly tried to render calm.

"I do not jest, Monsieur; I was really waiting for you."

"Then a truce to charlatanism. I did not come to

make trial of your skill as a sorcerer; but if you are one, so much the better, for you must know what I am come to say to you, and therefore can protect yourself beforehand."

"I protect myself?" said the count, with a peculiar smile, "and from what, if you please?"

"Divine, since you claim that power."

"Oh, yes; to please you, I spare you the shame of exposing the motive of your visit! You have come to seek a quarrel."

"You know that? Perhaps you also know why?" cried Philippe.

"On account of the queen. Now, Monsieur, it is your turn. Go on; I am ready to listen;" and these last words were not pronounced with the courteous accent of a host, but in the hard and dry tone of an adversary.

"You are right, Monsieur; I like that better."

"We are both suited, then."

"Monsieur, there exists a certain publication —"

"There are many publications," said Cagliostro.

"Edited by a certain journalist —"

"There are many journalists."

"Be patient; this publication — we will speak of the journalist afterward —"

"Permit me to remind you, Monsieur," interrupted Cagliostro, smiling, "that you have spoken of him already."

"Well, this morning's number contained an article aimed against the queen."

Cagliostro made an affirmative sign.

"You know to what I refer?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"You have bought one thousand copies of it?"

"I do not deny it."

"Luckily, they have not reached your hands."

"What makes you think so, Monsieur?"

"Because I met the porter, paid him, and sent him with them to my house; and my servant, instructed by me, must have received them."

"You should always finish yourself the work you undertake, Monsieur."

"I did not finish my own work, because while my servant was employed in saving from your bibliomania these thousand copies, I was engaged in destroying the rest of the edition."

"You are sure, then, that these thousand copies are at your house?"

"Certainly."

"You are mistaken, Monsieur; they are here. Ah, you thought," said the count, phlegmatic as a Nestor, "that I, sorcerer that I am, would let myself be foiled in that way? You thought it a brilliant idea to buy off my messenger? Well, I have a steward, and you see it is natural for the steward of a sorcerer to be a sorcerer also. He divined that you would go to the journalist, and that you would meet my messenger, and that you would pay him; he followed him, and threatened to make him return the gold you had given him. The man was afraid, and instead of going to your hôtel, he followed my steward here. But I see you doubt."

"I do."

"'Vide pedes, vide manus!' Jesus said to Saint Thomas. I will say it to you, Monsieur de Taverney. See this closet, and touch those papers;" and opening an oak cabinet he showed the astonished chevalier the thousand copies lying there.

Philippe approached the count in a menancing attitude, but the latter did not stir. "Monsieur," he said, "you

appear to be a man of courage; I call upon you to give me immediate satisfaction."

"Satisfaction for what?"

"For the insult to the queen; in which you render yourself an accomplice, while you keep one number of this vile paper."

"Monsieur," said Cagliostro, without changing his posture, "you make a mistake which gives me pain. I like novelties, scandalous reports, and other amusing things, and collect them that I may remember at a later day what I should otherwise forget. Therefore I have bought these copies, and I do not see that I have insulted anybody by the purchase."

"You have insulted me."

"You?"

"Yes, me, Monsieur; do you understand?"

"No, upon my honor, I do not understand."

"But why, I ask you, did you persist in buying so infamous a publication?"

"As I told you, because of my mania for collecting."

"A man of honor, Monsieur, does not collect infamous things."

"You will excuse me, Monsieur; but I am not of your opinion in regard to this paper. It is injudicious, perhaps, but it is not infamous."

"You will allow, at least, that it is a lie."

"You deceive yourself, Monsieur. The queen was at Monsieur Mesmer's."

"It is false, Monsieur."

"You mean to tell me I lie?"

"I do."

"Well, I will reply in a few words, — I saw her there."

"You saw her!"

"As plainly as I now see you."

Philippe looked his interlocutor full in the face. He wished to combat with his frank, noble, fine look the luminous gaze of Cagliostro; but the struggle wearied him, and he looked away saying, "I still say, Monsieur, that you lie."

Cagliostro shrugged his shoulders as he would have done at the insult of a madman.

"Do you not hear me, Monsieur?" said Philippe.

"On the contrary, Monsieur, I have not lost a word of what you say."

"And do you not know what giving the lie deserves?"

"Yes, Monsieur; there is a French proverb which says it merits a box on the ear."

"Well, Monsieur, I am astonished that your hand has not been already raised to give it, as you are a French gentleman, and know the proverb."

"Before making me a gentleman and teaching me the French proverb, God made me a man and told me to love my fellow-man."

"Then you refuse me satisfaction with the sword?"

"I only pay what I owe."

"Then you will compel me to take satisfaction in another manner."

"How?"

"I will not treat you worse than one nobleman should treat another, but I demand that you burn every copy of that journal which you have in your cabinet."

"Which I refuse to do."

"Reflect."

"I have reflected."

"Then I shall be obliged to proceed with you as another did with the journalist."

"Oh, a beating!" said Cagliostro, laughing, and still as motionless as a statue.

"Neither more nor less, Monsieur. Oh, you will not call your servants?"

"I! Nonsense! And why should I call my servants? It is no concern of theirs; I can settle my own affairs. I am stronger than you. Do you doubt it? I swear it is so, therefore reflect yourself. If you approach me with your cane, I shall take you in my arms and throw you across the room, and shall repeat this as often as you repeat your attempt."

"An English wrestling-match, — that is, a porter's game. Well, Monsieur Hercules, I accept the challenge," said Philippe, throwing himself furiously upon Cagliostro, who, seizing him round the neck and waist with a grasp of iron, threw him on a pile of cushions which lay some way off, and then again took his position before the fire-place as if nothing had happened.

Philippe rose, foaming with rage. But the reaction of cool reasoning soon restored to him his moral faculties. He straightened himself up, arranged his coat and his ruffles, then with a sinister voice, said: "Monsieur, you are in fact as strong as four men, but your logic is not as strong as your arm; and you forgot, when you treated me thus, that you gave me the right to say, 'Defend yourself, Count, or I will kill you.'"

Cagliostro did not move.

"Draw your sword, I tell you, Monsieur, or you are a dead man."

"You are not yet sufficiently near for me to treat you as I did before, and I will not expose myself to be wounded and perhaps killed by you as poor Gilbert was."

"Gilbert!" cried Philippe, reeling back. "Did you say Gilbert?"

"Happily you have no gun this time, only a sword."

"Monsieur," cried Philippe, "you have pronounced a name — "

"Which has awakened a terrible echo in your memory, has it not? — a name that you never thought to hear again, for you were alone with the poor boy, in that grotto at the Azores, when you assassinated him."

"Oh!" said Philippe, "defend yourself! defend yourself!"

"If you knew," said Cagliostro, "how easily I could make your sword fly from your hand."

"With your sword?"

"Yes; with my sword, if I wished."

"Then try! then try!"

"No, I have a still surer method."

"For the last time, draw your sword," said Philippe, springing toward the count; but the latter, now threatened by the sword's point, which was scarcely three inches from his breast, took from his pocket a small vial which he uncorked and threw the contents in Philippe's face. Scarcely had the liquid touched him, when he reeled, let his sword drop, and fell senseless.

Cagliostro picked him up, laid him on a sofa, waited for his senses to return, and then said, "At your age, Chevalier, we should have done with follies; cease therefore to act like a foolish boy, and listen to me."

Philippe made an effort to shake off the torpor which still held possession of him, and murmured, "Oh, Monsieur, do you call that the weapon of a gentleman?"

Cagliostro shrugged his shoulders. "You repeat forever the same word," he said. "When we of the nobility have opened our mouths wide enough to utter the word 'gentleman,' we think we have said everything. What do you call the weapon of a gentleman? Is it your sword, which served you so badly against me, or is it your gun,

which served you so well against Gilbert? What makes some men superior to others, Chevalier? Do you think it is that high-sounding word 'gentleman'? No; it is first reason, then strength, and most of all, science. Well, I have used all these against you. With my reason, I braved your insults; with my strength, I conquered yours; and with my science, I extinguished at once your moral and physical powers. Now I wish to show you that you have committed two faults in coming here with threats on your lips. Will you do me the honor to listen to me?"

"You have over-powered me," replied Philippe; "I can scarcely move. You have made yourself master of my muscles and of my mind, and then you ask me if I will listen."

Then Cagliostro took down from the chimney-piece another gold vial, which was held by a figure of Esculapius in bronze. "Smell this, Chevalier," said he, with a gentleness full of dignity.

Philippe obeyed, and it seemed to him that the cloud which hung over him was dispersed. "Oh, I revive!" he cried.

"And you feel free and strong?"

"Yes."

"With your full powers and memory of the past?"

"Yes."

"And as I have to deal with a man of courage and intelligence, that memory which returns to you gives me every advantage over you in regard to what has taken place between us."

"No," said Philippe; "for I have acted in defence of a vital and sacred principle."

"What do you mean?"

"I have defended the monarchy."

"You have defended the monarchy! — you, who went

to America to defend a republic! Ah, *mon Dieu!* be frank; either it was not the republic you were defending there, or it is not the monarchy you are upholding here."

Philippe cast down his eyes, a great sob almost broke his heart.

"Love," continued Cagliostro, — "love those who scorn you; love those who forget you; love those who deceive you. It is the fate of great souls to be ruined by their grand sentiments. It is the law of Jesus to return good for evil; you are a Christian, Monsieur de Taverney?"

"Monsieur," cried Philippe, terrified at hearing Cagliostro reading thus the present and the past, "not a word more; if I did not defend the monarchy, I defended the queen, — that is to say, an innocent woman, and to be respected even if she were not longer innocent, for it is a divine obligation to defend the weak."

"The weak! Do you call the queen weak? — her to whom twenty-eight million human beings bow the knee!"

"Monsieur, they calumniate her."

"How do you know?"

"I wish to believe it."

"You think it is your right?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, my right is to believe the contrary."

"You act like an evil genius."

"Who tells you so?" cried Cagliostro, whose sparkling eyes suddenly inundated Philippe with their light. "How have you the temerity to assume that you are right, and that I am wrong? You defend royalty; well, I defend the people. You say, 'Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's;' and I say, 'Render to God the things that are God's.' Republican of America, Chevalier of the order

of Cincinnatus, I recall you to the love of the people, to the love of equality. You trample on the people to kiss the hands of queens. I trample on queens to elevate the people but one degree. I do not disturb you in your adoration, leave me at peace in my work. I leave you the broad daylight, the sun of the heavens and the sun of courts; leave me shadows and solitude. You comprehend the strength of my language, do you not, — as you just now comprehended the force of my personality? You say to me, 'Die, for you have offended the object of my worship;' and I say to you, 'Live, you who combat the principles I worship;' and if I say this to you it is because I know that with these principles I am so strong that neither you nor yours, whatever you may do, can for an instant retard my progress."

"Monsieur, you frighten me," said Philippe. "I am perhaps the first in this country, thanks to you, to see the depths of the abyss into which royalty is hurrying."

"Be prudent, then, if you have seen the precipice."

"You who tell me this," replied Philippe, moved at the paternal tone in which Cagliostro had spoken to him; "you who reveal to me secrets so terrible, — you are still wanting in generosity, for you well know that I should throw myself into the abyss rather than see it engulf those whom I defend."

"Well, I have warned you, and like the prefect of Tiberius shall wash my hands, Monsieur de Taverney."

"Well, I!" cried Philippe, running to Cagliostro with feverish ardor, "I, who am weak and inferior to you, — I will employ against you the weapons of the weak; I will approach you with tearful eye, trembling voice, clasped hands; I will ask you for this once to be merciful to those you are pursuing. I will ask you for myself, — for myself, do you hear? — for myself, who cannot, I know not why,

bring myself to think of you as an enemy. I will work upon your feelings, I will convince you, I will ask you to spare me the remorse of seeing the downfall of this poor queen, without having tried to avert it. In short, Monsieur, I shall prevail on you to destroy this paper, which would make a woman weep; I will obtain this from you, or upon my honor, by that fatal love you know so well, I swear that with this sword, so powerless against you, I will pierce my heart here at your feet."

"Ah!" murmured Cagliostro, regarding Philippe with eyes full of eloquent sorrow, "why are they not all like you? I should be on their side, and they would not perish!"

"Monsieur, Monsieur, I entreat you, answer me!"

"Count them," said Cagliostro, after a moment's silence; "see if the thousand numbers are there; burn them yourself, even to the last number."

Philippe's heart was in his mouth; he ran to the cabinet, took out the copies of the journal, threw them on the fire, and pressed with effusion the hand of Cagliostro.

"Adieu, adieu, Monsieur," he said. "A hundred times I thank you for what you have done for me;" and he left the room.

"I owed the brother," said Cagliostro, when Philippe had gone, "this compensation for the suffering his sister endured." Then raising his voice he cried, "My horses!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BARON DE TAVERNEY.

WHILE these things were taking place in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, Monsieur de Taverney the elder was walking in his garden, followed by two servants pushing a wheeled-chair.

There were then at Versailles, and perhaps there are some still existing, a few of those old hôtels with French gardens, which by servile imitation of the taste and ideas of the sovereign resembled somewhat the Versailles of Le Notre and of Mansard. Several courtiers, who must have taken Monsieur de le Feuillade for their model, had constructed a miniature subterranean orange-house, a Swiss lake, and baths of Apollo. There were also a court-yard of honor and the Trianons, all five hundred times smaller than the original; each pond was about as large as a bucket of water.

Monsieur de Taverney had followed the prevailing custom since Louis XV. had taken the Trianons. His house at Versailles had its Trianons, its orchards, and its flower-beds. Since Louis XVI. had his locksmith shops and turning lathes, Monsieur de Taverney had his forge and his chips. Since Marie Antoinette had laid out English gardens, artificial rivers, prairies, and Swiss chalets, Monsieur de Taverney had made in a corner of his garden a little Trianon suitable for dolls, and a river for young ducks.

However, at the moment when we find him, he was enjoying the sunshine in the only avenue laid out in

the time of Louis XIV. which remained to him, — an avenue of lindens with their long red suckers looking like irons just drawn from the fire. He was walking slowly, his hands in his muff, and every five minutes the two servants approached him with the chair that he might rest after his exercise.

He was enjoying this repose and winking in the strong sunshine, when a porter came running from the house calling out, "Monsieur le Chevalier!"

"My son!" said the old man, with proud joy. And turning he perceived Philippe, who had followed the servant. "My dear Chevalier," he said, dismissing the servants by a sign, "your arrival is very timely, for my mind is full of happy thoughts; but how strange you look. You are in bad humor."

"I, Monsieur? no."

"You know already the result of that affair?"

"What affair?"

The old man turned round to see that no one was listening, then said, "I speak of the ball."

"I do not understand."

"The Opera-ball."

Philippe colored, the sly old man observed it. "Imprudent!" he said, "you are like bad sailors who as soon as there is a favorable wind furl every sail. Sit down on this bench and let me entertain you with some moral reflections; I have some good ones."

"But Monsieur, in short —"

"In short, Monsieur, you are too audacious; you who were at first so timid and delicate now compromise her."

Philippe looked up. "Of whom are you speaking, Monsieur?" he said.

"*Pardieu!* of her."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Ah! Do you think I have not heard about the pranks you two were playing at the Opera-ball. A pretty piece of work."

"Monsieur, I protest —"

"Come, do not be angry; I speak only for your good. You are not careful enough, you will be caught sometime. You were seen with her at this ball; another time you will be seen with her somewhere else."

"I was seen?"

"*Pardieu!* Had you, or had you not, a blue domino?"

Taverney was about to explain that he had not a blue domino, that it was all a mistake, that he had not been to any ball, and that he did not even know of what ball his father was speaking; but it is repugnant to some natures to defend themselves under delicate circumstances. Those only defend themselves energetically who know that by defending themselves, they are rendering a service to the friend who loves them and who accuses them.

"But of what use," thought Philippe, "to make explanations to my father? Besides, I wish to know everything."

"You see," continued the old man, "that you were recognized; I was sure of it. Indeed, Monsieur de Richelieu, who was at the ball in spite of his eighty-four years, and who is very fond of you, wondered who the blue domino could be on whose arm the queen was leaning, and he could suspect only you, for he had seen all the others. And you know the great discernment of Monsieur le Maréchal."

"That I may have been suspected, I can conceive; but that the queen should have been recognized is more extraordinary."

"Not so very difficult, since she took off her mask.

Oh, that passes all comprehension. Such audacity! That woman must be mad about you."

Philippe blushed. To continue the conversation further would have been impossible.

"If it was not audacity," said Taverney, "it was a very unfortunate accident. Take care, Chevalier, you have jealous rivals to fear. To be the favorite of a queen is an envied post, especially when the queen is really the king;" and Taverney senior slowly inhaled a pinch of snuff. "You will forgive me my little sermon, will you not, Chevalier? Pardon it, my dear. I feel very grateful toward you, and I would prevent the breath of chance from demolishing the scaffolding which you have so skilfully raised."

Philippe rose, perspiring freely, his hands clenched. He was about to go away in order to break off this conversation, and with the same pleasure one would take in breaking the back-bone of a serpent; but one feeling held him back, — a painful feeling of curiosity; an overpowering desire to know the worst, — one of those pitiless arrows which lacerate hearts overflowing with love.

"I was telling you, then," said the old man, "that we are looked upon with envy; that is very natural. However, we have not yet reached the pinnacle to which you are raising us. To you belongs the glory of elevating the name of Taverney above its humble source. But unless you are prudent, we shall never arrive, and your plans will miscarry on the way. That would be a pity, for indeed we are progressing well."

Philippe turned away to conceal the profound disgust, the bitter contempt which imparted to his features at this moment an expression at which the old man would have been astonished, perhaps terrified.

"In a short time you will ask for some high post," said the old man, growing excited. "You will obtain for me a

lord-lieutenancy in some place not too far from Paris; you will then make a peerage of Taverney-Maison-Rouge; you will have me included in the first promotion of the order. You can be duke, peer, and lieutenant-general. In two years — I shall still be living — you will obtain for me — "

"Enough! enough!" groaned Philippe.

"Oh, if you are satisfied with that, I am not. You have a whole life before you; I have but a few months. These months must repay me for the sad and miserable past. But I do not complain. God has given me two children. That is much for a man without fortune; but if my daughter has been useless in repairing our fortunes, you will make up for it. You are the architect of the temple. I see in you the great Taverney, the hero. You inspire me with respect, and that is something, you know. It is true that your conduct with the court has been admirable. Oh, I have never seen anything more skilful."

"What do you mean?" said the young man, uneasy at being approved by this serpent.

"Your demeanor is superb. You show no jealousy. You leave the field apparently open to every one, while you really hold it alone."

"I do not understand you," said Philippe, more and more annoyed.

"No modesty, if you please! It is a repetition of the conduct of Monsieur Potemkin, who astonished the world by his success. He saw that Catherine liked variety in her loves; that if left at liberty she would flutter from flower to flower, returning always to the sweetest and most beautiful, but that if pursued she would fly out of reach. He took his resolution. It was he who praised and rendered agreeable to the empress the new favorites whom she distinguished with her favor, — leaving always

a vulnerable point of attack; it was he who wearied the sovereign with these passing caprices, instead of satiating her with the charms of Potemkin himself. By aiding the ephemeral reign of these favorites, ironically called the twelve Cæsars, Potemkin rendered his own reign eternal, indestructible."

"But these are incomprehensible infamies!" murmured poor Philippe, gazing at his father in stupefaction.

The old man continued, with imperturbable calmness, "According to the system of Potemkin, you have been slightly at fault. He never abandoned his surveillance, while you relax yours. I know very well that French policy is not Russian policy."

To these words, spoken with an expression of cunning which would have baffled the most hardened diplomatists, Philippe, who thought his father was raving, answered by a shrug of the shoulders which was anything but respectful.

"Yes, yes," cried the old man, quickly; "you think that I have not divined your plan? But you shall see."

"Well, let us see, Monsieur," said Philippe, folding his arms.

"Will you tell me," said the baron, "that you have not your probable successor already in training?"

"My successor?" said Philippe, turning pale.

"Do you mean to tell me that you do not know the stability of the queen's amorous inclinations when once she is possessed by them, and that in the event of a change on her part you do not wish to be wholly sacrificed, evicted, which always happens where the queen is concerned, for she cannot at the same time love the present and endure the past?"

"You speak Hebrew, Monsieur le Baron."

The old man burst into a harsh and ominous laugh.

which made Philippe shudder as if it were the summons of an evil genius.

"You will make me believe that it is not your tactics to stand well with Monsieur de Charny?"

"Charny?"

"Yes, your future successor, — the man who can, when he is in power, exile you, as you now can exile Messieurs de Coigny, de Vaudreuil, and others."

The blood rushed violently to Philippe's temples.

"Enough," cried he, once more, — "enough, Monsieur! I am ashamed indeed to have listened so long. He who asserts that the queen of France is a Messalina, that man, Monsieur, is a criminal calumniator!"

"Good, — very good!" cried the old man. "You play your part well; but I assure you that no one can possibly hear us."

"Oh!"

"And as for Charny, I have divined your plan, although skilfully made; the gift of divination runs in the Taverney blood. Go on, Philippe, go on; flatter, mollify, console your Charny. Help him to pass by gentle gradations from the state of the green blade to that of the full-blown flower; and be assured that he is a gentleman who will later, when in favor, repay your kindness;" and after uttering these words, Monsieur de Taverney, quite proud of his exhibition of perspicacity, made a little fantastic leap as if he had been a young man, and a young man insolent in his prosperity.

Philippe, who was furious, seized him by the sleeve and stopped him.

"That is what you mean, is it, Monsieur? Your logic is admirable."

"I have guessed, have I not, and you are angry? Bah! you will pardon me, if only for my good intention. Be-

sides, I like Charny, and am glad that you have conducted yourself so well toward him."

"Your Monsieur de Charny is at this moment so much my favorite, my darling, my trained bird, that a little while ago I passed a foot of this blade between his ribs;" and Philippe held out his sword to his father.

"What!" cried Taverney, terrified at the sight of those flashing eyes and at this warlike intelligence. "Did you not say that you had fought with Monsieur de Charny?"

"And that I spitted him! Yes."

"Great God!"

"That is my mode of caressing, mollifying, and standing well with my successors," added Philippe; "and now that you are acquainted with it, apply your theory to my practice;" and he made a desperate effort to get away.

The old man clung to his arm. "Philippe, Philippe, tell me that you jest!"

"Call it a jest, if you please, but it is done."

The old man raised his eyes to heaven, mumbled some incoherent words, and leaving his son ran to his house.

"Quick! quick!" he cried, "a man on horseback! Let him go instantly to make inquiries about Monsieur de Charny, who has been wounded; let him not forget to say that he comes from me. That traitor, Philippe!" he said, returning, "is he not the brother of his sister? And I thought him cured! Oh, there is only one head in my family, and that is mine!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE QUATRAIN OF MONSIEUR DE PROVENCE.

WHILE these events were taking place at Paris and Versailles, the king, tranquil as usual, since he knew that his fleets were victorious and the perils of the preceding winter were safely passed, was sitting in his cabinet, surrounded by charts, maps, and drawings, and was tracing new furrows in the seas for the vessels of Lapeyrouse. A light knock at the door interrupted him in this occupation, and a voice was heard saying, "May I come in, brother?"

"Monsieur le Comte de Provence, the marplot!" muttered the king, pushing from him an open book on astronomy. "Come in," he said.

A stout person, short and red-faced, with an alert expression, entered with a step too respectful for a brother, too familiar for a subject.

"You were not expecting me, brother?" he said.

"No, upon my word."

"Do I disturb you?"

"No; but have you anything interesting to say to me?"

"A rumor so droll, so grotesque — "

"Ah! ah! a scandal."

"Upon my word! yes, brother."

"Which has amused you?"

"Oh, on account of its singularity."

"Some villanous attack against me?"

"God is my witness that I should not laugh if it were so."

"Against the queen, then?"

"Sire, imagine that I have been told, and very seriously, that — I will give you a hundred, a thousand times to guess what."

"Brother, I have no patience with that oratorical trick. To the point."

"Well, brother," said the Comte de Provence, somewhat chilled by this harsh reception, "I have been told that the queen slept out the other night. Ah! ah! ah!" and he pretended to laugh.

"That would be deplorable if it were true."

"But it is not true, is it, brother?"

"No."

"It is not true either that the queen was seen waiting outside the gate?"

"No."

"That night, you know, when you ordered the gate shut at eleven o'clock."

"I do not remember."

"Well, imagine, brother, that the rumor claims — "

"What is rumor? Where is it? What is it?"

"That is well said, brother. Indeed, what is rumor? Well, then, this impalpable, imcomprehensible thing they call rumor affirms that the queen was seen arm in arm with Monsieur le Comte d'Artois on that very night at half-past twelve."

"Where?"

"Going to a house belonging to Monsieur d'Artois, which stands back of the stables. Has your Majesty not heard of this enormity?"

"Well, yes, brother; I have heard about it, of course."

"How 'of course,' Sire?"

"Yes; did you not do something that I might hear of it?"

"I?"

"You."

"What then, Sire, have I done?"

"A quatrain, for instance, which appeared in the 'Mercury.'"

"A quatrain!" said the count, ruddier than when he entered the room.

"You are known to be a favorite of the Muses."

"Not to the degree of —"

"Of writing a quatrain of which this is the last line, —

"'Helen said nothing about it to the good king Menelaus.'"

"I, Sire?"

"Do not deny it; I have here the original of the quatrain, — your handwriting. Eh! I know very little about poetry, but as to handwriting, oh, I am an expert."

"Sire, one folly leads to another."

"Monsieur de Provence, I assure you that the folly has been wholly on your side, and I am astonished that a philosopher should have committed this folly; let us reserve this qualification for your quatrain."

"Sire, your Majesty is hard on me."

"Retaliation, brother. Now, if you had informed yourself of what the queen really did that day, as I did, instead of writing these lines against her, and consequently against me, you would have written an ode in favor of your sister-in-law. Perhaps the subject does not inspire you; but I should have liked a bad ode better than a good satire. Horace also says that, — Horace, your poet."

"Sire, you overwhelm me."

"If you had not been sure of the queen's innocence, as

I am," added the king, firmly; "you should have had recourse to your Horace. Is it not he who has written these beautiful words? Excuse me, if I murder the Latin, —

"'Rectius hoc est;
Hoc faciens vivam melius, sic dulcis amicis occurram.'

'That is the better course; if I act thus I shall be more honorable, and I shall be agreeable to my friends.' You would translate more elegantly, brother; but I think that is the sense of it." The good king, after this lesson, given in the manner of a father, rather than of a brother, waited for the culprit to say something in his justification.

The count considered, for some moments, his reply, not so much from lack of something to say, but as an orator in quest of fine sentences. "Sire," he said, "severe as is the judgment of your Majesty, I have a plea in excuse, and a hope of pardon."

"Say on, brother."

"You accuse me of being mistaken, do you not, and not of any bad intention?"

"Agreed."

"If it be so, your Majesty, who knows that every man is sometimes mistaken, will admit that I had some foundation for my mistake."

"I will never accuse your intelligence, which is broad and superior, brother."

"Well! Sire, how could I help being mistaken, hearing all the reports that are circulated? We princes live in an atmosphere of calumny, we are impregnated by it. I do not say that I believed it, I say that I was told so."

"Well and good! since it is so; but —"

"The quatrain? Oh, poets are strange beings; and then, is it not better to warn by gentle criticism than by a frowning brow? Verses of warning do not offend, Sire;

it is not so with newspaper articles, such as this one, for instance, which I have come to show you."

"An article?"

"Yes, Sire. An order for imprisonment must certainly be issued against the author of this vile work."

The king rose abruptly. "Let us see it!" he said.

"I do not know whether I ought, Sire —"

"Certainly you ought; there should be no concealment in a case like this. Have you this article?"

"Yes, Sire,"

"Give it to me."

The Comte de Provence drew from his pocket a copy of the "Histoire d' Etteniotna," — a fatal copy which notwithstanding the cane of Charny, the sword of Philippe, and the fire at Cagliostro's, had passed into circulation.

The king cast his eyes rapidly over the paper, and exclaimed, "Infamous! infamous!"

"You see, Sire, it affirms that my sister has been to Monsieur Mesmer's."

"Well, yes; she has been there."

"She has been there!" exclaimed the Comte de Provence.

"With my permission."

"Oh, Sire!"

"And it is not from the fact of her presence at Mesmer's that I infer imprudence on her part, since I allowed her to go to the Place Vendôme."

"Your Majesty did not give the queen permission to approach the vat to experience, in her own person —"

The king stamped his foot. The count said this just when Louis XVI. was running over the most insulting paragraph against Marie Antoinette, — in short, the relation of everything which had happened to Mademoiselle Oliva in Mesmer's house.

"Impossible! impossible!" said the king, turning pale. "Oh, the police shall deal with this!"

He rang. "Monsieur de Crosne," he said, — "let some one go for Monsieur de Crosne."

"Sire, it is the day for the weekly report, and Monsieur de Crosne is waiting in the antechamber."

"Let him come in."

"Allow me, brother," said the Comte de Provence, in a hypocritical tone; and he pretended to be about to take his leave.

"Remain," said Louis XVI. "If the queen is guilty, — well, Monsieur, you as one of the family may know it; if she is innocent, you must also know that, — you who suspected her."

Monsieur de Crosne entered the room. Seeing Monsieur de Provence with the king, he began by paying his respectful homage to the two greatest personages in the kingdom; then, addressing the king, "The report is ready, Sire," he said.

"In the first place, Monsieur," said Louis XVI., "explain how so infamous an article against the queen can be published in Paris."

"Etteniotna?" said Monsieur de Crosne.

"Yes."

"Well, Sire, it is by a journalist called Reteau."

"Yes; you know his name, and you have neither prevented him from publishing, nor arrested him after the publication!"

"Sire, nothing was easier than to arrest him; I will even show your Majesty an order for imprisonment already prepared in my portfolio."

"Then why was the arrest not made?"

Monsieur de Crosne now turned toward Monsieur de Provence.

"I take my leave of your Majesty," said the latter, slowly.

"No, no," replied the king; "I have told you to remain. Well, remain!"

The count bowed.

"Speak, Monsieur de Crosne, — speak openly, without reserve; speak quickly and clearly!"

"Well, this is the case," replied the lieutenant of police; "I have not arrested the journalist Reteau, because it was of the greatest importance, before taking this step, to consult with your Majesty."

"Well?"

"Perhaps, Sire, it would be better to give this journalist a bag of money, and send him away to get himself hanged elsewhere."

"Why?"

"Because, Sire, when these wretches tell a lie the public is glad enough to see them whipped, or even hanged, perhaps; but when, unfortunately, they hit upon a truth — "

"A truth?"

Monsieur de Crosne bowed.

"Yes, I know. The queen really was present at Mesmer's. She was there. It is unfortunate, as you say; but I had given her permission."

"Oh, Sire!" murmured Monsieur de Crosne.

This exclamation of the respectful subject had more effect on the king than when uttered by his jealous relation. "The queen is not ruined by that, I imagine," said he.

"No, Sire; but compromised."

"Monsieur de Crosne, what has your police told you on the subject?"

"Sire, many things, which, saving the respect I owe your Majesty, and the very respectful adoration I profess

for the queen, are in accordance with some allegations in the article."

"In accordance, do you say?"

"So far as this: a queen of France, who, dressed as an ordinary woman, mixes with that class of persons who are attracted by the magnetic extravagancies of Mesmer, and who goes alone —"

"Alone!" cried the king.

"Yes, Sire."

"You are mistaken, Monsieur de Crosne."

"I do not think so, Sire."

"You have incorrect reports."

"So exact, Sire, that I can give you a description of her dress, of her general appearance, her steps, her movements, her cries."

"Her cries!" The king turned pale, and crushed the journal in his hands.

"Even her sighs were observed by my agents." timidly added Monsieur de Crosne.

"Her sighs! Could the queen have forgotten herself to that degree? Could she have held so cheaply my honor as a king, — her honor as a woman?"

"It is impossible!" said the Comte de Provence; "that would be more than scandalous, and her Majesty is incapable of it."

This was an added accusation, rather than an excuse. The king felt it; it was all revolting to him. "Monsieur," he said, to the lieutenant of police, "you maintain what you have said?"

"Alas! even to the last word, Sire."

"I owe it to you, brother," said Louis XVI., "to prove what I have advanced. The honor of the queen is that of all my house. I never take chances with it. I allowed the queen to go to Mesmer's vat; but I had enjoined

upon her to take with her a reliable, irreproachable, even saintlike person."

"Ah!" said the Monsieur de Crosne, "if it had been so —"

"Yes," said the Comte de Provence, "if a woman like Madame de Lamballe, for example —"

"Precisely, brother; it is Madame la Princesse de Lamballe whom I had designated to the queen."

"Unfortunately, Sire, the princess did not accompany her."

"Well," added the king, trembling, "if she has disobeyed me so openly, I ought to punish, and I shall punish;" and he heaved a deep sigh which seemed to tear his heart.

"Only," he said in a lower tone, "I have still one doubt, which you will not share; that is natural. You are not the king, the husband, the friend of her who is accused. This doubt I am now about to solve."

He rang, the officer on duty appeared. "Let some one see whether Madame la Princesse de Lamballe is with the queen, or in her own apartment."

"Sire, Madame de Lamballe is walking in the private garden with her Majesty and another lady."

"Ask Madame la Princesse to come here immediately."

The officer left the room.

"Now, gentlemen, ten minutes more. I cannot come to a decision until then;" and Louis XVI., contrary to his usual habit, knit his brow and darted at the two witnesses of his profound sorrow a look almost threatening.

The two witnesses kept silence. Monsieur de Crosne was really sad; Monsieur de Provence affected an air of sorrow which would have saddened the god Momus himself.

A light rustling of silk behind the door warned the king that the Princesse de Lamballe was approaching.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PRINCESSE DE LAMBALLE.

THE Princesse de Lamballe entered, calm and beautiful, her brow uncovered, the ringlets of her high head-dress drawn back from her temples, her eyebrows black and delicate as if traced with sepia, her eyes blue, clear, dilated, her nose straight and finely formed, her lips chaste and voluptuous at the same time. All this beauty, with an unrivalled figure, was charming and imposing. The princess seemed to diffuse about her that perfume of virtue, of grace, of spirituality, which surrounded La Vallière, both before her favor and after her disgrace.

When the king saw her approaching, smiling and modest, he was overwhelmed with grief. "Alas!" he thought, "that which issues from that mouth will be a condemnation without appeal."

"Be seated, Princess," he said, bowing low.

Monsieur de Provence approached to kiss her hand.

The king collected his thoughts.

"What does your Majesty wish of me?" said the princess, in the voice of an angel.

"Some information, Madame, — precise information, cousin."

"I am ready, Sire."

"On what day did you accompany the queen to Paris? Try to remember, exactly."

Monsieur de Crosne and the Comte de Provence looked at each other in surprise.

"You understand, gentlemen," said the king; "you have no doubts, but I still doubt; consequently I put my questions like a man who doubts."

"Wednesday, Sire," replied the princess.

"Pardon me," continued Louis XVI.; "but, cousin, I wish to know the exact truth."

"You will know it by questioning me, Sire," said Madame de Lamballe, simply.

"For what did you go to Paris, cousin?"

"I went to Monsieur Mesmer's, in the Place Vendôme, Sire."

The two witnesses started, the king grew red with emotion.

"Alone?" he said.

"No, Sire, with her Majesty the queen."

"With the queen? you said with the queen?" cried Louis XVI., eagerly taking her hand.

"Yes, Sire."

Monsieur de Provence and Monsieur de Crosne drew nearer each other, astounded.

"Your Majesty gave the queen permission," said Madame de Lamballe; "at least, so her Majesty told me."

"And her Majesty was right, cousin. Gentlemen, I breathe again; Madame de Lamballe never tells a falsehood."

"Never, Sire," said the princess, gently.

"Oh, never, Sire," said Monsieur Crosne, with perfect sincerity. "But will you permit me, Sire?"

"Certainly, Monsieur; question, search. I place my dear princess upon the rack; I give her up to you."

Madame de Lamballe smiled; "I am ready," she said; "but, Sire, the torture has been abolished."

"Yes, I have abolished it for others," said the king, with a smile, "but they have not abolished it for me."

"Madame," said the lieutenant of police, "have the goodness to tell his Majesty what you did at Monsieur Mesmer's; but in the first place how was the queen dressed?"

"Her Majesty wore a dress of gray taffeta, a mantle of embroidered muslin, an ermine muff, and a rose-colored velvet bonnet trimmed with black."

Monsieur de Crosne looked astonished. It was a very different description from that given of Oliva's dress. The Comte de Provence bit his lips with vexation, and the king rubbed his hands. "What did you do on entering?" he asked.

"Sire, you are right to say 'on entering,' for we had hardly entered —"

"Together?"

"Yes, Sire; and we had hardly entered the first salon, where no one could have seen us, for everybody was giving their attention to the magnetic mysteries, when a lady approached the queen, and offering her a mask, implored her to turn back."

"And you stopped?" asked the Comte de Provence, quickly.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"You did not go through the rooms?" asked Monsieur de Crosne.

"No, Monsieur."

"And you did not leave the queen?" asked the king.

"Not for a moment, Sire. Her Majesty's arm rested constantly on my own."

"Now!" cried the king, "what do you say, Monsieur de Crosne? and you, brother?"

"It is extraordinary, — quite supernatural," said the count, who affected a gayety which could not conceal his disappointment.

"There is nothing supernatural in it," said Monsieur de Crosne, in whom the king's happiness inspired something like remorse; "what Madame de Lamballe says is undoubtedly true; therefore my informants must have been mistaken."

"Do you speak seriously, Monsieur?" asked the count.

"Perfectly, Monseigneur. Her Majesty did what Madame de Lamballe states, and nothing more, I feel convinced; my agents were, somehow or other, deceived. As for this journalist, I will immediately send the order for his imprisonment."

Madame de Lamballe looked from one to the other with an expression of innocent curiosity.

"One moment," said the king; "there will be time enough to hang the journalist. You spoke of a lady who came to prevent the queen from entering the salon; tell us who she was."

"Her Majesty seemed to know her, Sire; I will even say, because I never speak falsely, that I am sure her Majesty knows her."

"Because, cousin, I must speak to this person; it is indispensable. There lies all the truth, there only is the key to the mystery."

"That is my opinion also, Sire," said Monsieur de Crosne.

"Bosh!" murmured the Comte de Provence. "Here is a woman who seems to be a sort of *deus ex machina*." Then aloud, "Cousin, did the queen admit to you that she knew this person?"

"Her Majesty admitted nothing, Monseigneur; she told me so."

"Yes, yes; pardon."

"My brother means to say that if the queen knows that person, you also probably know her name."

"It is Madame de La Motte Valois."

"That intriguer!" cried the king, disgusted.

"That mendicant!" said the count. "The devil! she will be difficult to interrogate; she is cunning."

"We will be as cunning as she," said Monsieur de Crosne. "There is no chance for cunning after Madame de Lamballe's statement. So at the first word from the king —"

"No, no," said the king, with an air of weariness; "I am tired of seeing such persons about the queen; she is so benevolent that the pretext of poverty brings to her all doubtful characters among the lower nobility."

"Madame de La Motte is a true Valois," said the princess.

"However that may be, I will not see her here. I would rather renounce the immense joy which the complete justification of the queen would give, than look in the face of that creature."

"But you must see her, Sire," said the queen, entering at that moment, pale with anger, and beautiful with a noble indignation. "It is not now for you to say 'I do, or I do not, wish to see her.' She is a witness from whom the intelligence of my accusers," said she, looking at her brother-in-law, "and the justice of my judges," turning to the king and Monsieur de Crosne, "must draw the truth. I, the accused, demand that she be heard."

"Madame," said the king, "we will not do Madame de La Motte the honor of sending for her to give evidence either for, or against, you. I cannot stake your honor against the veracity of this woman."

"You need not send for her, she is here."

"Here!" cried the king, turning as if he had trodden on a snake.

"Sire, you know that I visited an unfortunate woman

who bears an illustrious name, on that day of which so many things were said," and she looked fixedly over her shoulder at the Comte de Provence, who felt ready to sink through the ground; "and while at her house I dropped a box containing a portrait, which she was to return to me to-day, — and she is here."

"No, no," said the king; "I am satisfied, and do not wish to see her."

"But I am not satisfied, and shall bring her in. Besides, why this repugnance? What has she done? If there be anything, tell me, you, Monsieur de Crosne; you know everything."

"I know nothing against this lady," he replied.

"Really?"

"Certainly not; she is poor, and perhaps ambitious, but that is all."

"Ambition is the voice of noble blood; if there be no more than that against her, the king can surely admit her."

"I do not know why," said Louis, "but I have a presentiment that this woman will be the cause of misfortune to me, of some disastrous event in my future life; that is quite enough."

"Oh, Sire, that is superstition; please bring her, Madame de Lamballe."

Five minutes later, Jeanne, with a timid air, although with a distinguished appearance, entered with dignity the cabinet of the king.

Louis XVI., strong in his antipathies, had turned his back toward her, and was leaning his head on his hands, seeming to take no longer a part in the conversation. The Comte de Provence cast on her glances so searching that, had her modesty been real, this woman would have been so paralyzed that she could not have spoken a word; but it required much more than that to trouble Jeanne.

"Madame," said the queen, leading her behind the king's chair, "have the goodness to tell the king exactly what took place the other day at Monsieur Mesmer's."

Jeanne did not speak.

"No reservations, nothing but the truth; tell everything just as you remember it;" and the queen sat down in an easy-chair, that she might not influence the witness even by a look.

Jeanne understood immediately that the queen had need of her, and knew that she could clear her in a moment by speaking the simple truth. Any one but Jeanne, having this conviction, would have yielded to the pleasure of exculpating the queen by enlarging upon the proofs; but she was so shrewd, so keen, so strong, that she confined herself to the simple relation of facts.

"Sire," said she, "I went to Monsieur Mesmer's from curiosity, like every one else. The spectacle appeared to me rather coarse; I was turning away when I suddenly saw her Majesty, whom I had already had the honor of seeing, but without knowing her until her generosity revealed her rank. When I saw those august features, which will never be effaced from my memory, it seemed to me that her Majesty was out of place in this room, where there was much suffering, and where many ridiculous exhibitions were made. I beg pardon for having taken it on myself to judge; it was a woman's instinct, but I humbly beg pardon if I passed the bounds of proper respect." She seemed overcome with emotion as she concluded.

Monsieur de Crosne was pleased. Madame de Lamballe felt drawn toward this woman who appeared at once delicate, timid, intelligent, and good. Monsieur de Provence was bewildered. The queen thanked Jeanne with a look, for which the latter was slyly watching.

"Well," said the queen, "you have heard, Sire."

He did not move, but said, "I did not need her testimony."

"I was told to speak," said Jeanne, timidly; "and I obeyed."

"Enough!" said Louis XVI., harshly. "When the queen says a thing she needs no witnesses to confirm what she has said; and when she has my approbation, which she has, she need care for that of no one else." He rose on saying these words, which overwhelmed Monsieur de Provence. The queen did not fail to add a disdainful smile. The king turned his back toward his brother, and kissing the hands of the queen and the princess, and begging pardon of the latter for having disturbed her "for nothing," made a very slight bow to Jeanne, to which she replied by a profound reverence calculated to display her gracefulness.

Madame Lamballe left the room first, then Madame de La Motte, whom the queen pushed before her, and finally the queen herself, who exchanged an almost loving look with the king as she went out.

"Brother," said Louis to the count, "now I will detain you no longer; I have work to do with Monsieur de Crosne. You have heard your sister's complete justification, and it is easy to see that you are as pleased as I am. Sit down, Monsieur de Crosne."

The Comte de Provence bowed, smiling; and when he could no longer hear the ladies, and felt safe from malicious smiles and bitter words, he left the cabinet.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN THE QUEEN'S APARTMENT.

THE queen went out from the king's cabinet fully understanding the peril to which she had been exposed. She appreciated the delicacy and reserve with which Jeanne had given her impromptu testimony, as well as the really remarkable discretion with which, after her success, she had kept herself in the background.

Indeed, Jeanne, who at her very first step had been admitted, by unprecedented good fortune, to a footing of confidential intimacy with the queen, for which courtiers the most adroit strive in vain for years, and who was sure of the queen's grateful remembrance of the service she had rendered at an important crisis, showed no consciousness of her position by any of those signs which the proud susceptibility of the great quickly discerns on the faces of inferiors.

The queen, then, instead of acceding to Jeanne's proposition to pay her respects and take leave, retained her with a pleasant smile, saying: "It is really fortunate, Countess, that you prevented me from entering Mesmer's house with the Princesse de Lamballe; for think of the baseness, — some one, who must have seen me either at the door, or in the antechamber, has made that the foundation of a rumor that I had been in the crisis-hall. Is not that what they call it?"

"The crisis-hall; yes, Madame."

"But," said the Princesse de Lamballe, "how could it have happened, even if the spectators had supposed the queen to be there, that the agents of Monsieur de Crosne should have been mistaken? That, in my opinion, is the mystery; the agents of the lieutenant of police affirm positively that the queen was in the crisis-hall."

"It is strange!" said the queen. "Monsieur Crosne is an honest man, and would not willingly injure me; but his agents may have been bought. I have enemies, dear Lamballe. Still, there must have been some foundation for this tale. This infamous libel represents me as intoxicated, and overcome to such a degree by the magnetic fluid that I lost all control over myself, and abandoned all womanly reserve. What is the truth in all this? Was there, in fact, a woman —"

Jeanne colored. The secret again presented itself, — the secret, one word of which would destroy her fatal influence on the queen's destiny. By revealing that secret, Jeanne would lose the chance of being useful, indispensable even, to her Majesty. She, therefore, as before, kept the secret to herself.

"Madame," said she, "there was a woman much agitated, who attracted great attention by her contortions and cries. But it seems to me —"

"It seems to you," said the queen, quickly, "that this woman was some actress, or some loose character, and not the queen of France?"

"Certainly not, Madame."

"Countess, you replied very well to the king, and I will not forget you. How have you advanced in your own affairs? But is not some one coming, Princess?"

At this moment Madame de Misery came in to say that Mademoiselle de Taverney wished to know if her Majesty would receive her.

"Assuredly," said the queen. "Oh, the ceremonious creature! She will never fail in any point of etiquette. Andrée, Andrée, come in!"

"Your Majesty is too good to me," said the latter, saluting gracefully. Jeanne, recognizing the second German lady from the bureau of charity, called to her face a blush and an expression of modesty.

Madame de Lamballe availed herself of Andrée's entrance to take leave. Andrée took her place by the side of Marie Antoinette, her calm and searching eyes fixed on Madame de La Motte.

"Well, Andrée," the queen then said, "here is this lady whom we went to see the last day of the frost."

"I recognize Madame," said Andrée, bowing.

Jeanne, already proud of the attention of the queen, tried to discover on the face of Andrée some sign of jealousy. She saw only complete indifference.

Andrée, having the same passions as the queen, — Andrée, who would have been superior to all other women in goodness, intelligence, and generosity if she had been happy, concealed herself in an impenetrable reserve, which all the court imagined to be the proud modesty of the chaste Diana.

"Do you know," said the queen, "what they have been saying of me to the king?"

"They must have said all that is bad, because they could not find words to say all that is good."

"That is," said Jeanne, with frankness, "the most beautiful thing I ever heard. I say beautiful, because it expresses fully the sentiment which is that of my whole life, and which my weak intelligence could never have rendered in these words."

"I will tell you about it, Andrée."

"Oh, I know, Madame! Monsieur de Provence has

been repeating the whole story. A friend of mine heard him."

"It is a happy way," said the queen, angrily, "of propagating falsehood, after paying homage to the truth. Let us leave that. I was speaking to the countess about her personal affairs. Who protects you, Countess?"

"You, Madame," replied Jeanne, boldly, — "you who permit me to come and kiss your hand."

"She has heart," said Marie Antoinette; "I like this impulsiveness."

Andrée did not reply.

"Few people," continued Jeanne, "dared to smile on me when I was in obscurity; now that I shall have been once seen at Versailles, every one will contend for the honor of being agreeable to the queen, — I mean to one on whom the queen has deigned to look."

"What!" said the queen, "no one has been either brave enough, or corrupt enough, to protect you for yourself?"

"I had first Madame de Boulainvilliers, a brave woman; then her husband, a corrupt protector. But since my marriage, no one, — oh, no one!" she said, with a most skilful affectation of distress. "Oh, yes, I forget one brave man, — a generous prince!"

"Prince, Countess! Who is it?"

"Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan."

The queen made an abrupt movement toward Jeanne. "My enemy!" said she, smiling.

"Your enemy! he! the cardinal! Oh, Madame!" cried Jeanne.

"It seems you are astonished that a queen should have an enemy. It is evident you have not lived at court."

"But, Madame, he adores you, — at least I thought so;

and if I am not mistaken, his respect for the august spouse of his king equals his devotion."

"Oh, I believe you, Countess, I believe a part of what you say; yes, that is it, the cardinal is in a state of adoration," and she turned to Andrée with a hearty burst of laughter. "Well, Countess, Monsieur le Cardinal is in a state of adoration. That is why he is my enemy."

Jeanne affected the surprise of a country girl.

"And you are his protégé," continued the queen; "tell me all about it."

"It is very simple; his Eminence has assisted me in the most generous, yet the most considerate, manner."

"Good! Prince Louis is generous; no one can deny that. But do you not think, Andrée, that Monsieur le Cardinal also adores this pretty countess a little? Come, Countess, tell us," and Marie Antoinette laughed again in her frank, joyous manner.

"All this gayety must be put on," thought Jeanne; so she answered, with a grave air and penetrating tone, "Madame, I have the honor to affirm to your Majesty that Monsieur de Rohan —"

"Well," said the queen, interrupting the countess, "since you are so zealous in his defence, since you are his friend, ask him what he did with some hair of mine which he bribed a certain hair-dresser to steal; and which trick cost the poor man dear, for he lost my custom."

"Your Majesty surprises me; Monsieur de Rohan did that?"

"Oh, yes; all his adoration, you know. After having hated me at Vienna, and employing every means to prevent my marriage, he at last began to perceive that I was a woman and his queen, and that he had offended me forever. Then this dear prince began to fear for his future,

and like all of his profession, who seem most fond of those whom they most fear, since he knew me to be young and believed me to be foolish and vain, he changed to a Celadon. After sighs and languishing airs, he threw himself, as you say, into a state of adoration. He adores me, does he not, Andrée?"

"Madame!"

"Oh, Andrée will not compromise herself, but I say what I please; at least royalty should have some advantages. Countess, I know and you know, do we not, that the cardinal adores me? So it is a settled thing, and you may tell him, Countess, that he has my permission."

These words, which contained bitter irony, had a powerful effect on the corrupt heart of Jeanne de La Motte. If she had been noble, pure, and loyal she would have seen in them only the supreme disdain of a woman of sublime character, only the perfect contempt of a superior soul for the low intrigues which were carried on beneath her.

Women of this kind, these angels so rare, never defend their reputation against the snares which are set for them on the earth. They will not even suspect the existence of the mire which soils them, — that bird-lime in which they leave the most brilliant feathers of their gilded wings.

Jeanne, being of a corrupt and vulgar nature, thought she saw much spite in this manifestation of anger on the part of the queen against Monsieur de Rohan. She recalled the rumors, which, starting from the palace, had penetrated the suburbs of Paris, and had found many an echo.

The cardinal, a lover of women from the sexual point of view, had said to Louis XV., who admired them in the same way, that the dauphiness was not a complete woman. The singular remarks of Louis XV. at the

time of his grandson's marriage will be recalled, and his questions to a certain ingenuous ambassador.

Jeanne, a complete woman if there ever was one, a woman from head to foot, vain of the locks of hair which distinguished her, — Jeanne, who felt the need of pleasing and conquering by all her attractions, did not understand how a woman could feel otherwise on these delicate points.

"There is spite on the part of the queen," she said, "if so, there must be something else." Then, reflecting that discussion produces knowledge, she began to defend Monsieur de Rohan with all the tact and all the curiosity with which Nature, like a good mother, had endowed her.

The queen listened.

"Good, she listens," thought Jeanne; and deceived by her own perverted nature, she did not perceive that the queen listened through generosity, and through pleasure at the novelty of hearing a person defended of whom the sovereign chose to speak ill. Marie Antoinette was pleased with her, thinking she saw a heart where God had placed a dry and thirsty sponge.

The conversation was continued on a footing of condescending intimacy on the part of the queen. Jeanne was upon thorns; she looked embarrassed; she saw no possibility of getting away without a dismissal, — she who had just now played the advantageous part of the stranger who asks leave to withdraw. But suddenly a youthful, joyous, and loud voice was heard in the next room.

"The Comte d'Artois!" said the queen.

Andrée rose immediately, and Jeanne prepared to withdraw, but the prince had entered so suddenly that it was almost impossible for them to go out. However, Madame de La Motte made a pretence of withdrawing. The prince stopped on seeing this pretty woman, and saluted her.

"Madame la Comtesse de La Motte," said the queen, presenting Jeanne to the prince.

"Ah! ah! do not let me send you away, Madame la Comtesse," said the Comte d'Artois.

The queen made a sign to Andrée, who detained Jeanne. That sign meant, "I intended to give something to Madame de La Motte; I have not had time, so will attend to it later."

"You have returned from the wolf-hunt, then?" said the queen, giving her hand to her brother after the English fashion, which was already coming into favor.

"Yes, sister, and have had good sport; I have killed seven, and that is something wonderful."

"You have killed them all yourself?"

"I am not sure," continued he, laughing; "but they say so. However, do you know I have gained seven hundred francs?"

"How?"

"Why, they pay a hundred francs a head for these beasts. It is dear, but I would give two hundred of them just now for the head of a certain journalist."

"Ah! you know the story, already?"

"Monsieur de Provence told me."

"He is indefatigable; but tell me how he related it?"

"So as to make you whiter than ermine, whiter than Venus Aphrodite."

"It is true, nevertheless, that he related to you that adventure?"

"Of the journalist? yes, sister. But your Majesty came out of it with honor. One might even say — to make a pun such as Monsieur de Bièvre is guilty of every day — the affair of the tub is washed."

"Oh, what a horrible pun!"

"Sister, do not ill-treat a knight who comes to place

his arm and his lance at your disposal. Happily, you need no aid. Ah, my dear sister, you are fortunate."

"You call that fortunate! Do you hear him, Andrée?"

Jeanne laughed. The count, who had not ceased looking at her, gave her courage. The queen had spoken to Andrée, Jeanne replied.

"Yes, fortunate," repeated the Comte d'Artois; "for it might easily have happened, my dear sister, in the first place, that Madame de Lamballe had not been with you."

"Should I have gone there alone?"

"In the second place, that Madame de La Motte had not been there to prevent your entrance."

"Ah, you know that Madame la Comtesse was there?"

"Sister, when Monsieur le Comte de Provence tells a story he tells it all. And finally, you might not have had Madame de La Motte at hand at that moment to give her testimony. You will tell me, doubtless, that virtue and innocence are like the violet, which does not require to be seen in order to be discovered; but sister, they make bouquets of violets when they find them, and throw them away when they have inhaled their perfume. That is my lesson."

"It is a fine one!"

"I take it as I find it, and I have proved that you are fortunate."

"Badly proved."

"Must I prove it more completely?"

"It would not be superfluous."

"Well! you are unjust to accuse fortune," said the count, twirling on his heel to the sofa, where he sat down by the queen's side, "for in short, saved from the famous escapade of the cabriolet —"

"One," said the queen, counting on her fingers.

"Saved from the vat —"

"So be it, I will count it. Two. And then?"

"And saved from the affair of the ball," he whispered in her ear.

"What ball?"

"The ball at the Opera."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the ball at the Opera; but I beg pardon, I should not have mentioned it."

"Really, brother, you puzzle me; I know nothing about the ball at the Opera."

The words "ball" and "Opera" caught Jeanne's ear, and she listened intently.

"Mum!" said the prince.

"Not at all! not at all! You spoke of an affair at the Opera. Explain to me what you mean."

"I implore your mercy, sister."

"I insist, Count, on knowing."

"And I insist on holding my tongue."

"Do you wish to offend me?"

"No, sister, but I have told you quite enough for you to understand."

"You have told me nothing."

"Oh! little sister, it is you who are puzzling me. Come now — in earnest."

"Upon my honor, I am in earnest."

"You wish me to speak?"

"Immediately."

"Not here," said he, looking at Jeanne and Andrée.

"Yes, here; there cannot be too many witnesses of such an explanation."

"Beware, sister!"

"I will risk it."

"Then you mean to say you were not at the last Opera-ball?"

"I!" cried the queen, "at the Opera-ball?"

"Hush, I beg."

"No, I will not hush, I will speak it aloud. You say I was at the ball?"

"Certainly I do."

"Perhaps you saw me," she said, ironically, but even then jestingly.

"Yes, I did."

"Me!"

"Yes, you."

"Oh, it is too much; why did you not speak to me? That would have been still more droll."

"Upon my word I was just going to do so, when the crowd separated us."

"You are mad!"

"I was sure you would say so. I should not have spoken of it. I have been very foolish."

The queen rose, and walked up and down the room in great agitation. The count watched her in astonishment; Andrée trembled with fear and disquietude; and Jeanne could hardly keep from laughing.

Then the queen stopped and said. "My friend, do not jest any more; you see, I am so passionate that I have lost my temper already. Confess at once that you wished to amuse yourself at my expense, and I shall be very happy."

"I will say so, if you wish it, sister."

"Be serious, Charles."

"As a fish, sister."

"For mercy's sake, tell me that you have invented all this."

He winked at the ladies and said, "Oh, yes, of course, I invented it; forgive me."

"You do not understand me, brother," cried the queen,

vehemently. "Say yes, or no; in presence of these ladies retract what you have said. Do not tell falsehoods, I want only the truth!"

Andrée and Jeanne retired behind the tapestry.

"Well then, sister," said he, in a low voice, "I have told the truth; why did you not warn me sooner?"

"You saw me at the Opera-ball?"

"As plainly as I see you now; and you saw me."

The queen uttered a cry, and running up to Andrée and Jeanne dragged them out from behind the tapestry, one by each hand, crying, "Ladies, Monsieur le Comte d'Artois affirms that he saw me at the Opera-ball."

"Oh!" murmured Andrée.

"It is too late to retract," continued the queen; "prove it, prove it, —"

"Well," said he, "I was with Monsieur de Richelieu and others when your mask fell off."

"My mask!"

"I was about to say, 'This is too rash, sister,' but you had disappeared with the gentleman who attended you."

"Oh, my God! you will drive me mad. What gentleman?"

"The blue domino."

The queen passed her hand over her eyes. "What day was this?" she asked.

"Saturday; the day before I set out on my hunting excursion. You were asleep when I went away, so that I could not tell you what I have told you now."

"My God! my God! at what time do you say you saw me?"

"Between two and three."

"Decidedly, one of us is mad."

"Oh, it is I. It is all a mistake; do not be so afraid,

there is no harm done. At first I thought you were with the king; but the blue domino spoke German, and he does not."

"German — a German. Oh! I have a proof, brother. On Saturday I went to bed at eleven."

The count bowed, with an incredulous smile.

The queen rang, "Madame de Misery shall tell you."

"Why do you not call Laurent, the guard of the Reservoir gate; he will bear testimony also," said he, laughing; "It is I who cast that cannon, little sister; do not fire it off at me."

"Oh," cried the queen, in a rage; "not to be believed!"

"My dear sister, I would believe you if you would not get in such a passion; but how to prove it? If I say yes, others coming here will say no."

"What others?"

"*Pardieu!* those who saw you as I did."

"Ah, that is curious indeed! There were persons who saw me. Well, show them to me."

"At once. Philippe de Taverney was there."

"My brother!" said Andrée.

"He was there, Mademoiselle," replied the prince; "do you wish to question him, sister?"

"I demand it, instantly."

"My God!" murmured Andrée.

"What is it?" said the queen.

"My brother called as witness."

"Yes, yes; I wish it."

The queen called; a servant entered, and immediately set out in haste seeking Philippe. Philippe was found near his father's house, which he had just left, after the scene which we have described.

Philippe, master of the field of battle after his duel with Charny, — Philippe, who had just rendered a service to the queen, was walking joyously toward the palace at Versailles. The messenger met him on the way and communicated to him the queen's orders, which he hastened to obey.

Marie Antoinette rushed to meet him, and placing herself before him, "Monsieur," said she, "are you capable of speaking the truth?"

"Yes, Madame; and incapable of telling an untruth."

"Well, then, say frankly, have you seen me at any public place within the last week?"

"Yes, Madame," replied Philippe.

Every heart in the room might have been heard beating.

"Where have you seen me?" asked the queen, in a terrible voice.

Philippe was silent.

"Oh, no concealment, Monsieur; my brother says that he saw me at the Opera-ball; now where did you see me?"

"Like Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois, I saw you at the Opera-ball, Madame."

The queen sank on a sofa; then springing up like a wounded panther, she said, "It is impossible, for I was not there. Take care, Monsieur de Taverney, I see that you are putting on Puritan airs; that was all very well in America with Monsieur de Lafayette, but here, at Versailles, we are French, and polite and simple."

"Your Majesty overwhelms Monsieur de Taverney," said Andrée, pale with anger. "If he says that he saw you, he did see you."

"You too," said Marie Antoinette; "you too! It only remains now for you to have seen me. My God! if I

have friends to defend me, I also have enemies to assassinate me. One witness only is not sufficient evidence, gentlemen."

"You remind me," said the Comte d'Artois, "that at the moment when I saw you, and when I perceived that the blue domino was not the king, I thought that it was the nephew of Monsieur de Suffren. What is his name? I mean the brave officer who performed the great exploit. You received him so graciously the other day that I thought he might be your chevalier of honor."

The queen blushed, Andrée became pale as death. They exchanged glances, and trembled at each other's looks.

Philippe became livid. "Monsieur de Charny?" he murmured.

"Charny! that is it," continued the Comte d'Artois. "Do you not think, Monsieur Philippe, that the blue domino's figure resembled somewhat Monsieur de Charny's?"

"I did not notice it, Monseigneur," said Philippe, almost choking.

"But," continued Monsieur le Comte d'Artois, "I soon saw that I was mistaken, for Monsieur de Charny suddenly made his appearance near Monsieur de Richelieu, — just opposite you, sister, when your mask fell off."

"And he saw me?" cried the queen, losing all prudence.

"Unless he was blind," said the prince.

Making a gesture of despair, the queen rang again.

"What are you doing?"

"I wish to question Monsieur de Charny also, — to drain the cup to the dregs."

"I do not believe that Monsieur de Charny is at Versailles," murmured Philippe.

"Why do you think so?"

"I was told, I believe, that he was not well."

"Oh, the affair is so serious that he must come, Monsieur! I also am not well; but I would go to the end of the world barefoot to prove —"

Philippe, heart-broken, approached Andrée, who, looking out of a window opening on the gardens, had uttered a slight exclamation.

"What is the matter?" said the queen, coming up to her.

"Nothing, nothing — Monsieur de Charny was said to be ill, and I see him."

"You see him?" cried Philippe, with a sudden movement.

"Yes; it is he."

The queen, forgetting everything, opened the window herself, and called out, "Monsieur de Charny!"

The latter turned his head, and overcome with astonishment hastened to the palace.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN ALIBI.

MONSIEUR DE CHARNY entered, a little pale, but upright, and apparently not suffering. At sight of this illustrious company he assumed the respectful and dignified demeanor of the man of the world and the soldier.

"Take care, sister!" said the Comte d'Artois; "it seems to me you are questioning everybody?"

"Brother, I will ask the whole world, until I meet some one who will tell you that you are deceived."

Charny and Philippe bowed courteously to each other, and Philippe said, in a low voice, "You are surely mad to come out wounded; one would say you wished to die."

"One does not die from the scratch of a thorn in the Bois de Boulogne," replied Charny, happy in giving his enemy a moral thrust more painful than the thrust of a sword.

The queen approached and put an end to this conversation. "Monsieur de Charny," she said, "these gentlemen say that you were at the Opera-ball."

"Yes, your Majesty," said Charny, bowing.

"Tell us what you saw there."

"Does your Majesty mean what I saw there, or whom I saw there?"

"Precisely; whom did you see there, and no complaisant reserve, Monsieur de Charny."

"Must I tell all, Madame?"

The cheeks of the queen assumed once more a deadly paleness.

"Did you see me?" she asked.

"Yes, your Majesty, at the moment when your mask, unhappily, fell off."

Marie Antoinette clasped her hands. "Monsieur," she said, almost sobbing, "look at me attentively. Are you sure of what you say?"

"Madame, your features are engraved on the hearts of all your subjects. To have seen your Majesty once is to see you forever."

Philippe looked at Andrée, Andrée fixed her eyes upon Philippe. These two griefs, these two jealousies, made a sorrowful alliance.

"But, Monsieur," she said, "I assure you I was not at the Opera-ball."

"Oh, Madame!" said the young man, bowing almost to the ground, "has not your Majesty the right to go where you please?"

"I do not ask you to excuse my action; I only beg you to believe that I did not perform it."

"I will believe all your Majesty wishes me to believe," cried he, moved in the very depths of his heart by this persistence of the queen, by this touching humility of a woman so proud.

"Sister, sister, it is too much!" murmured the count, in Marie Antoinette's ear.

For this scene had chilled the hearts of all present, — some through the pain caused by their love, or their self-love; others through the emotion inspired by an accused woman, who defends herself with courage against overwhelming proofs.

"They believe it! they believe it!" cried the queen, beside herself with anger; and discouraged she sank into

an arm-chair, stealthily wiping away with the tip of her finger a scalding tear. Suddenly she rose.

"Sister, sister, forgive me!" said the Comte d'Artois, tenderly; "you are surrounded by devoted friends. This secret, which terrifies you so, we alone know; and no one can draw it from us except with our lives."

"Secrecy, secrecy!" cried the queen. "Oh, I do not wish it!"

"Sister!"

"No secret, but proof."

"Madame," said Andrée, "some one approaches."

"Madame," said Philippe, in a low tone, "the king."

"The king," cried an usher, in the antechamber.

"The king! so much the better. Oh, the king is my only friend! The king would not judge me guilty, even if he thought he had seen me. The king is welcome!"

The king entered with an air of calmness, in strange contrast with the disturbed countenances about the queen. "Sire," cried the latter, "you come most opportunely. Sire, here is another calumny, another insult to combat."

"What is the matter?" said Louis XVI., coming forward.

"Monsieur, a rumor, an infamous rumor. Come to my aid, Sire, for this time it is not my enemies who accuse me but my friends."

"Your friends?"

"These gentlemen — my brother (pardon, Monsieur le Comte d'Artois), Monsieur de Taverney, Monsieur de Charny — assure me that they saw me at the Opera-ball."

"At the Opera-ball!" cried the king, knitting his brows.

"Yes, Sire."

A terrible silence ensued. Madame de La Motte saw the gloomy uneasiness of the king; she saw the mortal pale-

ness of the queen; with a word, a single word, she might put an end to this painful struggle; with one word she could defend the queen from all past accusations and shield her against those of the future. But her heart did not prompt her to this course; her own interest dissuaded her. She said to herself that it was too late; that if she spoke now, they would see that she had deceived them before, at a time when the whole truth would have been of such advantage to the queen, and that she should forfeit her newly acquired favor. Therefore she was silent.

Then the king repeated, in a voice full of anguish, "At the Opera-ball? Who has spoken of this? Does Monsieur le Comte de Provence know this?"

"But it is not true," cried the queen, with the accent of despairing innocence. "It is not true; Monsieur le Comte d'Artois is mistaken, Monsieur de Taverney is mistaken. You are mistaken, Monsieur de Charny. In short, any one may be mistaken." All bowed.

"Come," cried the queen, "call my people, everybody; question them! The ball was on Saturday, was it not?"

"Yes, sister."

"Well, what did I do Saturday? Let some one tell me, for really I am going mad, and if this continues I shall believe myself that I went to this infamous Opera-ball; but if I had gone there, I would acknowledge it, gentlemen."

At this moment the king approached her with dilated eyes, smiling face, and outstretched hands. "Saturday," he said, — "Saturday, was it, gentlemen?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Well then," he continued, becoming more and more calm, more and more joyous, "you need question only your maid, Marie. She will perhaps remember at what hour I

went to your apartment; it was, I think, about eleven o'clock in the evening."

"Ah!" cried the queen, transported with joy, "yes, Sire." She threw herself into his arms; then blushing and confused, she hid her face on the king's breast, who kissed tenderly her beautiful hair.

"Well!" said the Comte d'Artois, bewildered with joy and surprise combined, "I will buy some spectacles. But, *mon Dieu!* I would not have lost this scene for a million; would you, gentlemen?"

Philippe was leaning against the wainscot as pale as death. Charny, cold and impassive, wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Therefore, gentlemen," said the king, delighted at the effect he had produced, "it is impossible that the queen could have been that night at the Opera-ball. Believe it if you please; the queen, I am sure, is satisfied that I believe her."

"Well!" added the Comte d'Artois, "Monsieur de Provence may think as he pleases; but I defy his wife to prove an 'alibi' in the same way if she should be accused of spending the night abroad."

"Brother!"

"Sire, I kiss your hand."

"Charles, I will go with you," said the king, after giving a last kiss to the queen.

Philippe had not stirred.

"Monsieur de Taverney," said the queen, severely, "do you not accompany the Comte d'Artois?"

Philippe drew himself up; the blood rushed to his temples. He almost fainted. He had hardly strength to bow, to look at Andrée, to cast a terrible glance at Charny, and restrain the expression of his insensate grief. He left the room.

The queen retained with her Andrée and Monsieur de Charny.

The position of Andrée, thus placed between her brother and the queen, between her love and her jealousy, was such as to cause her great suffering. She felt that Philippe would have given his life to prevent a *tête-à-tête* between the queen and Charny; and she acknowledged that it would break her heart if, by following and consoling Philippe as she ought to do, she should leave Charny alone with Madame de La Motte and the queen. Indeed, she divined from Jeanne's modest, and at the same time familiar, manner that her presence would be no restraint. How could she explain what she felt? Was it love? Oh, love — she would have said to herself — does not spring up and grow with such rapidity in the cold atmosphere of the court. Love, that rare plant, delights to flower in generous, pure, innocent hearts. It will not take root in a heart profaned by recollections, in a soil chilled by tears which have been concentrating there for years. No, it was not love which Mademoiselle de Taverney felt for Monsieur de Charny. She repelled with all her might such an idea, because she had sworn never to love anything in this world.

But why had she suffered so much when Charny addressed a few words of respect and devotion to the queen? Yes, that must have been jealousy. Yes, Andrée acknowledged that she was jealous, not of the love which a man might feel for another woman than herself, but jealous of the woman who could inspire or receive this love. She observed, with melancholy, all the handsome suitors of the new court who were about her, — those gallant men, full of ardor, who did not understand her, and kept aloof after having offered her a few attentions, some because her coldness was not that of philosophy, others because this cold-

ness was in strange contrast with the old frivolities in which Andrée had been brought up.

And then men, whether in search of pleasure or dreaming of love, distrust the coldness of a woman twenty-five years of age who is beautiful, who is rich, who is the favorite of the queen, and who goes her way alone, cold, silent, and pale, along a path where supreme joy and supreme happiness consists in making as much noise as possible.

To be a living problem is to be without attraction. Andrée had perceived this; she had observed that eyes little by little had been averted from her beauty, that intellect distrusted or denied her intellect. She saw even more: this abandonment became a habit with the old courtiers, an instinct with the new; it was no more the custom to approach Mademoiselle to converse with her, than it was usual to approach the statues of Latona or Diana at Versailles. Whoever bowed to Mademoiselle de Taverney and then turned away to smile on another woman, conceived that he had done his duty.

This did not escape the keen eye of the young girl. She whose heart had experienced so much trouble without knowing a single pleasure, she who felt age advancing upon her with its retinue of pallid cares and gloomy memories, meditated in her sorrowful, sleepless nights on the delights in store for the happy lovers at Versailles and sighed, in mortal bitterness, "And I, my God! and I!"

When she met Charny on that night of the severe cold, when she saw the eyes of the young man rest curiously upon her, and envelop her gradually in a network of sympathy, she was no longer sensible of this strange reserve evinced toward her by all the courtiers. To this man she was a woman. He had re-awakened youthfulness in her, he had revived the dead. He had caused the marble of Diana and Latona to blush.

Therefore Mademoiselle de Taverney became immediately attached to this regenerator who had made her conscious of vitality. She was happy in looking at this young man, to whom she was not a problem. She was unhappy in the thought that another woman was about to clip the wings of her bright-hued fancy, and appropriate her dream which had scarcely emerged from its golden portal.

All this explains why Andrée did not follow Philippe out of the queen's cabinet, although she felt deeply the outrage offered her brother, and although that brother was to her an object of idolatrous devotion.

Mademoiselle de Taverney, who was concerned only to prevent a private interview between the queen and Charny, had no thought of taking part in the conversation after her brother's dismissal. She sat in a corner by the fireplace, almost turning her back to the group which formed about the queen. The queen was sitting, Charny standing and bending forward, Madame de La Motte standing in the recess of a window, where her affected timidity had sought a refuge, and her actual curiosity a place of observation.

The queen remained silent for some moments. She could not readily start a new conversation in connection with the delicate explanation that had just taken place.

Charny appeared to be suffering, and his attitude was not displeasing to the queen.

At length Marie Antoinette broke the silence, and replying at the same time to her own thought and to that of the others, "This proves," she said, "that we have enemies. Would any one believe, Monsieur, that such disgraceful things could happen at the court of France?"

Charny made no reply.

"What happiness," continued the queen, "to live on your vessels, under the open sky, on the open sea! They

tell us of the wrath, the cruelty of the waves. Ah, Monsieur, consider your own case. Have not the waves of the ocean — the most furious waves — thrown upon you the foam of their wrath? Have not their assaults sometimes prostrated you on the deck? Well, look at yourself; you are in good health, you are young, you are honored."

"Madame!"

"Have not the English," continued the queen, gradually becoming more animated, "also discharged upon you their wrath, in flame and bullets, — a wrath dangerous to life, is it not? But of what moment is that to you? You are safe, you are strong; and by reason of the wrath of the enemies you have conquered, the king has congratulated you, has caressed you, and the people know and love your name."

"Well, Madame?" murmured Charny, who saw with dread the increasing excitement of the queen.

"At what am I aiming?" she said; "it is this: Blessed be the enemies who launch against us flame, iron, and foaming waves! Blessed be the enemies who threaten us only with death!"

"*Mon Dieu!* Madame," replied Charny; "your Majesty has no enemies, — except as the serpent is enemy to the eagle. That which crawls, clinging to the ground, cannot annoy those who soar in the clouds."

"Monsieur," the queen quickly replied, "I know that you have returned from battle safe and sound; you have emerged safe and sound from the tempest; you have come forth triumphant and beloved. But those whose name an enemy like ours soils with the slime of calumny, although it is true their lives are not endangered, are made older by every tempest shock; they accustom themselves to bow their heads, in the fear of meeting, as I have done

to-day, a twofold injury by friends and foes combined in one attack. And then, Monsieur, if you knew how painful it is to be hated!"

Andrée anxiously awaited the young man's answer. She trembled lest he should reply in the words of tender consolation which the queen appeared to solicit. But Charny, on the contrary, wiped his brow with his handkerchief, sought for support by leaning on the back of a chair, and turned pale.

The queen, looking at him, said, "Is it not too warm here?"

Madame de La Motte opened the window with her delicate hand, attacking the fastening as vigorously as if her wrist had been that of a man. Charny breathed the air with delight.

"Monsieur is accustomed to the air of the sea; he will stifle in the boudoirs of Versailles."

"It is not that, Madame," replied Charny; "but I have a special order to fulfil at two o'clock, and unless your Majesty commands me to remain —"

"By no means, Monsieur," returned the queen; "we know what a special order is, do we not, Andrée?" Then turning toward Charny, she said, with a slight appearance of vexation, "You are free, Monsieur," and she dismissed the young officer with a wave of the hand.

Charny bowed with the air of a man in haste, and disappeared behind the tapestry. A few seconds later a noise was heard in the antechamber, as of some one groaning and others hastening to his relief. The queen was near the door, either by accident or because she had wished to observe Charny, whose hasty withdrawal had seemed to her extraordinary. She raised the tapestry, uttered a slight cry, and seemed about to rush forward. But Andrée, who had closely observed her movements, placed herself be-

tween the queen and the door. "Oh, Madame!" said she. The queen looked intently at Andrée, who firmly sustained the scrutiny. Madame de La Motte reached her head forward. Between the queen and Andrée was a small clear space, and looking through that she could see Charny lying in a swoon and several servants and guards attending him. The queen, noticing Madame de La Motte's movement, hastily closed the door. But it was too late, Madame de La Motte had seen.

Marie Antoinette, with a frown on her brow, moved slowly to her chair. She was a prey to that gloomy pre-occupation which succeeds all violent emotion. She seemed not to be aware that there was any one near her. Andrée also, though she remained standing, leaning against the wall, seemed not less pre-occupied than the queen. There ensued a moment of silence.

"Here is something extraordinary," said the queen, suddenly, startling her two companions by her abruptness; "Monsieur de Charny seems to me to be still in doubt!"

"In doubt of what, Madame?" asked Andrée.

"Why, about my being at home on the night of the ball."

"Oh, Madame!"

"Is it not so, Countess?" said the queen. "Am I not right? Is not Monsieur de Charny still in doubt?"

"Against the king's word? Oh, that is impossible, Madame!"

"He may think that the king came to my aid through his own self-respect. Oh, he does not believe! he does not believe! that is easy to see."

Andrée bit her lips. "My brother is not so incredulous as Monsieur de Charny," she said; "he seemed to be quite convinced."

"Oh, that would be bad!" continued the queen, who had not listened to Andrée's reply; "and in that case this young man's heart is not so pure and upright as I thought." Then striking her hands angrily together, "But after all," she cried, "if he saw me there, why should he believe that I was not there? Monsieur le Comte d'Artois also saw me, and Monsieur Philippe, — at least he says so. Every one saw me, and the king's word was needed to make them believe, or pretend to believe. Oh, there is something under all this, — something which I ought to clear up, since no one else thinks of doing so. Is it not true, Andrée, that I ought to search into and discover the meaning of all this?"

"Your Majesty is right," said Andrée; "and I am sure that Madame de La Motte is of my opinion, and thinks with me that your Majesty ought to search until the discovery is made. Do you not, Madame?"

Madame de La Motte, taken by surprise, was startled and made no reply.

"For, also," continued the queen, "they say they saw me at Mesmer's."

"Your Majesty was there," Madame de La Motte hastened to say, smiling.

"Yes," replied the queen; "but I did not do what is charged against me in that article. And then they saw me at the Opera, and I certainly was not there." She reflected a moment, and then cried out, eagerly, "Oh, I have hold of the truth!"

"The truth?" stammered the countess.

"Oh, so much the better!" said Andrée.

"Let Monsieur de Crosne be summoned immediately," said the queen, joyously, to Madame de Misery, who had come in.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MONSIEUR DE CROSNE.

Monsieur de Crosne found himself in a very embarrassing position after the explanation which had taken place between the king and queen. The full possession of a woman's secrets, especially when that woman is a queen, imposes on one no inconsiderable burden, when one's business is to watch over the interests of the crown and protect its fame.

Monsieur de Crosne believed that he was about to be exposed to a woman's anger and a queen's indignation; but he was strongly intrenched in his official obligations, and his well-known urbanity would serve as a shield to ward off the first blows. He entered quietly, with a smile on his lips. The queen, however, did not smile.

"Come, Monsieur de Crosne," said she, "it is now our turn to have an explanation."

"I am at your Majesty's orders."

"As lieutenant of police you should know the source of all this that is happening to me."

Monsieur de Crosne looked around him with a somewhat affrighted appearance.

"Do not be disturbed," continued the queen. "You know well these two ladies; you know every one."

"Very nearly," said the magistrate; "I know persons, I know effects; but I do not know the source of that to which your Majesty alludes."

"Then I am sorry to have to inform you," said the queen, annoyed by the calm demeanor of the lieutenant of police. "It is evident enough that I might give you my secret secretly, in a low voice, or in a place apart; but I prefer, Monsieur, the open daylight and the full voice. Well, then, I ascribe the effects, as you call them, — the effects of which I complain, — to the evil conduct of some one who resembles me, and who exhibits herself in those places where you and your agents think I have been seen."

"A resemblance!" cried Monsieur de Crosne, too much occupied in sustaining the queen's attack to notice Jeanne's momentary confusion and an exclamation by Andrée.

"Do you find the supposition impossible, Monsieur? Would you prefer to believe that I am deceiving myself, or deceiving you?"

"Madame, I do not say that. But whatever resemblance there might be between any other woman and your Majesty, there must still be so much difference that no experienced observer could be deceived."

"The observers can be deceived, Monsieur, because they have been deceived."

"I can give your Majesty an example," said Andrée.

"Ah!"

"When we were at home, at Taverney-Maison-Rouge, we had a girl in our service who, by a strange freak of Nature — "

"Resembled me!"

"Oh, your Majesty, so much as to deceive any one!"

"And that girl, — what became of her?"

"We did not then know your Majesty's generous and elevated disposition, and my father was afraid that the resemblance might be displeasing to the queen; so when we were at Trianon we kept the girl concealed from the eyes of all the court."

"You see, then, Monsieur de Crosne? Ah, this interests you?"

"Much, Madame."

"Go on, my dear Andrée."

"Well, Madame, that girl, being of a restless, ambitious spirit, soon wearied of being so isolated. She became acquainted, doubtless, with some evil-minded person, and one evening, on retiring for the night, I was surprised by her absence. She was searched for, but she had disappeared."

"My double had stolen something from you?"

"No, Madame; I had nothing."

Jeanne had listened to this conversation with an eagerness easily to be conceived.

"So you knew nothing of all that, Monsieur de Crosne?" asked the queen.

"No, Madame."

"So there lives a woman bearing a striking resemblance to me, and you do not know it! An event of this importance occurs in the kingdom, giving rise to grave disorders, and you are not the first to be informed of that event! Come, confess, Monsieur, the police service is very badly administered."

"But," replied the magistrate, "I assure you, Madame, it is not. Though to the eyes of the vulgar, the functions of the lieutenant of police are as exalted as are those of a god, your Majesty, who is placed so far above me in this terrestrial Olympus, is well aware that the king's magistrates are but men. I do not command events; and some events are so strange that human intelligence can hardly understand them."

"Monsieur, when a man has received all possible facilities for penetrating even to the thoughts of his fellow-beings; when through his agents he engages spies in his

service; when through his spies he is able to note even the gestures I make before my mirror, — if that man is not the master of events — "

"Madame, when your Majesty spent a night away from home, I knew it. Is my police well administered? Yes, it is, is it not? That day your Majesty had visited Madame, who is here present. That was no affair of mine. When you appeared at Mesmer's vat you had really gone thither, I suppose; and my police service is well performed, since my agents saw you there. When you went to the Opera — "

The queen quickly raised her head.

"Allow me to speak, Madame. I say 'you,' as Monsieur le Comte d'Artois has said 'you.' If the brother-in-law can be mistaken as to his sister's appearance, certainly an agent of the police may be deceived. The agent said he thought he had seen you. My police service was well performed on that day. Will you say also, Madame, that my agents did not well follow up that affair of the journalist Reteau, whom Monsieur de Charny has so soundly beaten? "

"Monsieur de Charny? " cried Andrée and the queen, at the same time.

"The event is not yet old, Madame, and the blows of the cane are still warm on the journalist's shoulders. This is one of those occurrences from which my predecessor, Monsieur de Sartines, would have made capital, in his spirited narrations to the late king, or to the favorite."

"Did Monsieur de Charny commit himself with this fellow? "

"I have heard it only through my police, which is so calumniated, as you know, Madame; and you will confess that it must have required some intelligence in that police to discover the duel which followed this affair."

"Monsieur de Charny engaged in a duel! Monsieur de Charny has fought a duel!" cried the queen.

"With the journalist?" Andrée said eagerly.

"Oh, no, ladies, the journalist was too well beaten to have been able to give Monsieur de Charny the wound which made him faint in your antechamber."

"Wounded! he is wounded!" cried the queen. "Wounded! but when was this? How did it happen? You must be mistaken, Monsieur de Crosne."

"Oh, Madame, your Majesty so often finds me at fault that you might allow that for once I am right."

"He was here just now."

"I know that."

"Oh, but," said Andrée, "I saw that he was suffering."

These words she spoke in such a manner that the queen recognized their hostility, and turned quickly round. The queen's look was an answer which Andrée met with resolute composure.

"What do you say?" said Marie Antoinette; "you saw that Monsieur de Charny was suffering, and did not speak of it!"

Andrée did not reply. Jeanne came to the assistance of the favorite, of whom it was necessary to make a friend. "I too," she said, "thought that Monsieur de Charny found it difficult to stand while your Majesty did him the honor to speak to him."

"Difficult, yes," said the proud Andrée, who did not thank the countess even with a look.

Monsieur de Crosne, having passed through his examination, was now leisurely observing these three women, not one of whom mistrusted that she was undergoing the lieutenant's scrutiny.

At last the queen continued, "Monsieur, with whom and why did Monsieur de Charny fight?"

Andrée, meanwhile, had recovered her self-possession.

"With a gentleman, who — but *mon Dieu!* Madame, it is useless; the two adversaries understand each other now, and a little while ago they were conversing together in your Majesty's presence."

"In my presence, — here?"

"Yes, here; the victor was the first to leave, about twenty minutes ago."

"Monsieur de Taverney!" cried the queen, with an angry flash in her eyes.

"My brother!" murmured Andrée, who reproached herself for having been so selfish as not to have understood everything.

"I think," said Monsieur de Crosne, "that it was, in fact, with Monsieur Philippe de Taverney that Monsieur de Charny fought."

The queen struck her hands violently together, which was always a sign of her most passionate rage.

"It is improper, improper!" she said. "What! American manners brought to Versailles! Oh, no, I will not permit them to gain a footing here."

Andrée bowed her head, Monsieur de Crosne also.

"So, then, because one has been associating with Monsieur Lafayette and Monsieur Washington," — the queen affected to pronounce this name as if it were French, — "my court is to be transformed into a battle-ground of the sixteenth century! No! once more, no! Andrée, you must have known that your brother had fought."

"I learn it now for the first time, Madame."

"Why did he fight?"

"We might have asked that of Monsieur de Charny, who fought with him," said Andrée, pale and with flashing eyes.

"I do not ask," replied the queen, arrogantly, "what Monsieur de Charmy has done; but what Monsieur Philippe de Taverney has done."

"If my brother has fought," said the young girl, letting her words fall one by one, "it must have been in your Majesty's service."

"Do you mean to say that Monsieur de Charny did not fight in my service, Mademoiselle?"

"I have the honor to remark to your Majesty," replied Andrée, in the same tone, "that I speak to the queen of my brother only, and of no other."

Marie Antoinette remained calm, but to do so she required all the self-control of which she was capable. She rose, took a turn around the room, pretended to look at herself in the mirror, took a volume from a book-case, ran over seven or eight lines, then threw it aside. "I thank you, Monsieur de Crosne," she said to the magistrate; "you have convinced me. My head was rather confused by all these stories, all these suppositions. Yes, the police is very efficient, Monsieur; but I beg you to think over this resemblance of which I have spoken to you. You will not forget, Monsieur? Adieu." She held out her hand with supreme grace, and he departed twice happier than when he came, and with ten times as much information. Andrée understood the tone in which this word "Adieu" was spoken; she made a slow and formal reverence. The queen bade her adieu in a careless manner, but without any apparent ill-feeling. Jeanne bowed as before a sacred altar, and prepared to take leave.

Madame de Misery entered. "Madame," she said to the queen, "has not your Majesty an appointment with Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange for this hour?"

"Ah, it is true, my good Misery; it is true. Let them come in. Remain a little longer, Madame de La Motte. I wish the king to make full peace with you." The queen while saying these words watched in a mirror the expression on the face of Andrée, who was slowly retiring toward

the door. She wished perhaps to rouse her jealousy by thus showing favor to the new-comer. Andrée disappeared beneath the folds of the tapestry; she had shown not the slightest emotion.

"Steel! steel!" cried the queen, sighing. "Yes, these Taverneys are all steel, but gold also. Ah, gentlemen, good-day. What do you bring me that is new? You know very well that I have no money."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TEMPTRESS.

Madame de La Motte had resumed her position; she kept herself somewhat apart like a modest woman, and stood attentively observant like one to whom had been accorded the privilege of remaining as a spectator.

Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange, in ceremonial costume, presented themselves to receive audience of their queen. They advanced toward the queen's chair, bowing repeatedly.

"Jewellers," said the queen, suddenly, "you have come here only to speak of jewels. You come at a bad time, gentlemen."

Monsieur Boehmer was the orator of the partnership. "Madame," he said, "we do not come to offer our goods to your Majesty, we should fear to be indiscreet."

"Oh!" said the queen, already repenting of having shown so much spirit, "to see jewels is not to purchase them."

"Undoubtedly, Madame," continued Boehmer, trying to catch the thread of his discourse; "but we come to perform a duty, and that has emboldened us."

"A duty?" said the queen, in astonishment.

"Concerning that beautiful diamond necklace which your Majesty did not deign to take."

"Ah! well — the necklace. Then it has come back to us!" cried Marie Antoinette, laughing.

Boehmer remained serious.

"The fact is, it was very beautiful, Monsieur Boehmer," added the queen.

"So beautiful, Madame," said Bossange, timidly, "that your Majesty alone is worthy of wearing it."

"My consolation is," said Marie Antoinette, with a light sigh, which did not escape Madame de La Motte, "that it cost — a million and a half; was not that the price, Monsieur Boehmer?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"And that in these agreeable times in which we live, when the hearts of the people are cold, there is no sovereign who can purchase a diamond necklace worth fifteen hundred thousand francs."

"Fifteen hundred thousand francs!" repeated Madame de La Motte, like a faithful echo.

"So that, gentlemen, no one can have that which I cannot, ought not, to purchase. You will answer me that each stone is valuable by itself. It is true; but I should not envy any one two or three diamonds; I might envy them sixty of them." The queen rubbed her hands with a degree of satisfaction which included a slight desire to tease Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange.

"That is just where your Majesty is in error," said Boehmer; "and that brings us to the duty which we have come to perform; the necklace is sold."

"Sold!" cried the queen, turning round.

"Sold!" said Madame de La Motte, whom the movement of her protectress inspired with anxiety as to her pretended self-denial.

"To whom, then?" asked the queen.

"Ah! Madame, that is a State secret."

"A State secret! Good, we can laugh about it, then," exclaimed Marie Antoinette, joyously. "These secrets

are very often kept, because there is really nothing to tell, — is it not so, Boehmer?"

"Madame!"

"Oh! State secrets; they are very common things with us. Take care, Boehmer; if you do not confide to me your secret, I will have one of Monsieur de Crosne's agents steal it from you," and she laughed heartily, manifesting clearly her opinion as to the pretended secret which would prevent Boehmer and Bossange from revealing the name of the purchasers of the necklace.

"We do not conduct ourselves toward your Majesty as toward other customers. We have come to inform your Majesty that the necklace is sold, because it really is sold; and we must not reveal the name of the purchaser, because the sale was made secretly by an ambassador sent incognito."

The queen at this word "ambassador" was seized with a new fit of hilarity. She turned toward Madame de La Motte, saying, "What is most admirable in Boehmer is, that he is capable of believing what he has just told me. Come, Boehmer, just tell me the country from which this ambassador comes? No, that is too much," said she laughing; "the first letter of his name, that will do," and once in a laughing mood, she could restrain herself no longer.

"It is the ambassador from Portugal," said Boehmer, in a low voice, as if to keep his secret at least from the ears of Madame de La Motte.

At this assertion, so positive, so clear, the queen suddenly stopped. "An ambassador from Portugal!" she said; "there is none here, Boehmer."

"He came expressly for this, Madame."

"To your house, incognito?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Who is it, then?"

"Monsieur de Souza."

The queen did not reply for some moments; then as if she had made up her mind: "Well!" she said, "her Majesty the queen of Portugal is fortunate; the diamonds are beautiful. Let us say no more about it."

"Madame, on the contrary, your Majesty will allow me to speak — will allow *us*," said Boehmer, looking at his partner. Bossange bowed.

"Have you ever seen those diamonds, Countess?" cried the queen, looking at Jeanne.

"No, Madame."

"Beautiful diamonds! It is a pity these gentlemen have not brought them."

"Here they are," said Bossange, eagerly. And he drew from his hat, which he carried under his arm, the little flat box containing the necklace.

"Look, look, Countess! you are a woman, this will please you," said the queen. And she drew back a little from the Sèvres plaque upon which Boehmer had displayed the necklace with so much art that the light in striking the stones brought jets of fire from almost every facet. Jeanne uttered a cry of admiration. And indeed, nothing could be more beautiful; it seemed to emit tongues of fire, sometimes green and red, sometimes white as light itself. When Boehmer moved the case backward and forward, the streams of wonderful liquid flame would gush forth.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" cried Jeanne, a prey to the delirium of an enthusiastic admiration.

"Fifteen hundred thousand francs, which might be held in the hollow of my hand," said the queen, with an affectation of the phlegmatic philosophy which Monsieur Rousseau of Geneva would have displayed under similar circumstances.

But Jeanne saw something in this disdain beside the disdain itself; for she did not despair of convincing the queen, and after a careful examination of the diamonds, "Monsieur Boehmer is right," she said; "there is in the world only one queen worthy of wearing this necklace, and that is your Majesty."

"My Majesty will not wear it, however."

"We could not allow it to leave France, Madame, without coming to lay at the feet of your Majesty all our regrets. It is a jewel known over all Europe, and whose possession is disputed. That any other sovereign should adorn herself with it, after it has been refused by the queen of France, our national pride will permit only when you, Madame, shall have once more, definitely, irrevocably, refused it."

"My refusal has been pronounced," replied the queen. "It has been made public, and has been too much applauded for me to repent of it."

"Oh, Madame," said Boehmer, "if the people found it admirable that your Majesty should prefer a ship-of-war to a necklace, the nobility, which is French also, would not think it surprising that the queen of France should purchase a necklace after having purchased a ship-of-war."

"Let us speak no more of it," said Marie Antoinette, casting a last look at the casket.

Jeanne sighed in sympathy with the queen.

"Ah! you sigh, you, Countess. If you were in my place, would you do differently?"

"I do not know," murmured Jeanne.

"Have you looked at them enough?"

"I could look at them forever, Madame."

"Let her look, gentlemen; she is admiring them. That takes nothing from the value of the diamonds;

they are still worth fifteen hundred thousand francs, unfortunately."

That word "unfortunately" seemed to offer a favorable opportunity to the countess. The queen regretted, therefore she had desired. She had desired, therefore she desired still, since that wish had not been satisfied. Such was Jeanne's logic, we must believe, since she added, "Fifteen hundred thousand francs, Madame, which on your neck would cause all women to die of jealousy." And snatching the royal necklace from the case, she clasped it so skilfully, so quickly, about the lovely neck of Marie Antoinette that the latter found herself, in the twinkling of an eye, inundated with phosphorescent and changing colors.

"Oh, your Majesty is sublime thus!" said Jeanne.

Marie Antoinette quickly went to a mirror. She was dazzling; her neck, white and flexible as that of Jane Grey, delicate as a lily-stalk, destined to fall like Virgil's flower beneath the iron, rose gracefully with its golden ringlets from the midst of this luminous flood. Jeanne had ventured to expose the queen's shoulders, so that the last row of diamonds fell on her pearly bosom. The queen was radiant, the woman was superb. Lovers or subjects, all would have prostrated themselves before her. Marie Antoinette was lost in admiration of herself. Then seized with fear, she wished to tear the necklace from her shoulders. "Enough," she said, "enough!"

"It has touched your Majesty," cried Boehmer; "it can belong to no one else."

"Impossible," replied the queen, firmly. "Gentlemen, I have amused myself with these diamonds, but to prolong the sport would be a fault."

"Your Majesty has ample time to become accustomed to this idea," Boehmer whispered to the queen; "we shall return to-morrow."

"To postpone payment is not to avoid it. And then, why postpone? You need the money. The other purchasers will doubtless pay you in a manner more to your advantage."

"Yes, your Majesty, in ready money," replied the merchant.

"Take them, take them! Put the diamonds in the case again. Quick! quick!"

"Your Majesty forgets, perhaps," said Madame de La Motte, "that such an ornament is always equivalent to money, and that a hundred years from now the necklace will still be worth what it is worth to-day."

"Give me fifteen hundred thousand francs, Countess," said the queen, with a forced smile, "and we will see."

"Oh, if only I had them!" cried Jeanne. She then remained silent. Long speeches sometimes are less forcible than an expressive reticence.

In vain did Boehmer and Bossange spend a quarter of an hour in replacing the diamonds in their case, and carefully securing the locks, — the queen gave no sign of yielding. It might be seen, however, in her gloomy manner and her silence, that she was passing through a painful struggle. As was her custom in moments of vexation, she reached out for a book, and turned over a few pages without reading them.

The jewellers took leave, saying, "Your Majesty has refused?"

"Yes; and again, yes," sighed the queen; and this time she sighed so that all might hear.

The jewellers departed. Jeanne perceived the agitation of Marie Antoinette in the nervous movement of her feet on the velvet cushion. "She suffers," said the countess to herself.

Suddenly the queen rose, took a turn around the room, and pausing before Jeanne, whose watchful look fascinated her, "Countess," she said, "it appears that the king will not return. Our little petition must be postponed till the next audience."

Jeanne bowed respectfully, and made a movement toward the door.

"But I shall keep you in mind," added the queen, kindly.

Jeanne pressed her lips to the queen's hand, as if she would there place her heart, and withdrew, leaving Marie Antoinette a prey to vexation and longing.

"The vexation of weakness, the longing of unsatisfied desire," said Jeanne to herself. "And she is the queen! Oh, no, — she is a woman."

The countess disappeared.

END OF VOL. I.

THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE

Volume II.

Book Two

THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE.

CHAPTER I.

AMBITION IN THE GUISE OF LOVE.

JEANNE also was a woman, though she was not a queen. And therefore she was hardly seated in her carriage when she began to compare that splendid palace of Versailles with her fifth-story apartment, — those magnificent lackeys with her old servant Clotilde. But immediately the attic rooms and the old servant faded into the past, and Jeanne saw her little house in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, so elegant and comfortable, and her lackeys, less adorned with embroidery than those of Versailles, but as respectful and obedient. That house and those lackeys were her Versailles. There she was a queen no less than Marie Antoinette, and her wishes once formed, provided they were limited, not to what was necessary, but to what was reasonable, were as well and as speedily executed as if she had held a sceptre.

It was, then, with a cheerful face, and a smile on her lips, that Jeanne re-entered her house. It was still early. She took paper, pen, and ink, wrote a few lines, enclosed them in a fine, perfumed envelope, wrote the address, and rang the bell. Hardly had its last vibration ceased when the door opened, and a servant stood on the threshold.

"I was right," murmured Jeanne; "the queen is not better served." Then aloud, "Take this letter to Monseigneur le Cardinal de Rohan."

The lackey took the note and went out, in silent obedience. The countess fell into a revery, in continuance of her meditations on the road from Versailles. Five minutes later the lackey returned.

"Well?" said Madame de La Motte, with a slight accent of impatience, on seeing that her order had not been executed.

"As I was going out," said the lackey, "Monseigneur knocked at the door. I told him that I was starting out to go to his house. He took the letter, read it, and came in, saying, 'It is all right; announce me.'"

"Go on."

"Monseigneur is here, waiting Madame's permission to enter."

A light smile played on the lips of the countess. After a silence of two seconds, "Let him come in," she said, with an air of peculiar satisfaction.

Was that pause of two seconds made for the purpose of keeping waiting in her antechamber a prince of the Church, or did Madame de La Motte need them for the completion of her plan?

The prince appeared in the doorway.

In returning to her house, in sending for the cardinal, in experiencing so much satisfaction at his arrival, Jeanne had, then, a plan?

Yes; for this longing of the queen, like the night-fires which reveal the gloomy features of a landscape, had exposed to the eyes of the intriguing countess all the recesses of a soul too proud to take precautions against observation. The journey from Versailles to Paris is of some length, and when it is made side by side with the demon of cupidity,

he has time to whisper to the traveller the most daring counsels.

Jeanne was still intoxicated with the view of that immense amount of money — fifteen hundred thousand francs — spread out in diamonds on the white satin of the jewel-case. Fifteen hundred thousand francs! Was it not, indeed, a princely fortune, — especially to the poor mendicant who, only a month before, was holding out her hands for charity? Certainly there was a greater distance between the Jeanne de Valois of the Rue Saint Claude and the Jeanne de Valois of the Faubourg Saint Antoine than between the Jeanne de Valois of the Faubourg Saint Antoine and Jeanne de Valois, mistress of the necklace. She had, then, accomplished more than half the journey which led to fortune.

And this fortune, coveted by Jeanne, was no illusion, like the words of a contract, or like territorial possession, which require the exercise of imagination to give them value; no, the necklace was a fortune in sight, — there, always there, glowing and fascinating; and since the queen could desire it, Jeanne de Valois well might dream of it; since the queen could make up her mind to forego possession of it, Madame de La Motte well might place it as the limit of her ambition.

The cardinal, who was to realize these dreams, interrupted them in responding by his unexpected presence to her desire to see him. He also had his dreams; he also had his ambition, which he concealed under the mask of love.

"Ah, my dear Jeanne!" said the cardinal, "you have become so necessary to me that my entire day has been clouded by the thought that you were so far from me. You are well, after your visit to Versailles?"

"Why, as you see, Monseigneur."

"And contented?"

"Enchanted."

"The queen received you, then?"

"Immediately on my arrival I was introduced to her presence."

"You have good luck. One might infer from your triumphant manner that the queen spoke to you."

"I spent about three hours in her Majesty's cabinet."

The cardinal started, and was very near repeating after Jeanne, in a tone of astonishment, "Three hours!" but he restrained himself. "You are really an enchantress!" he said, "and no one can resist you."

"Oh, oh, you exaggerate, Prince!"

"No, really. And so you remained three hours with the queen?"

Jeanne nodded.

"Three hours!" repeated the cardinal, smiling. "What a number of things an intelligent woman like you can say in three hours!"

"Oh, I assure you, Monseigneur, I did not lose my time!"

"I will wager," ventured the cardinal, "that during those three hours you did not once think of me."

"Ungrateful man!"

"Really?" cried the cardinal.

"I did more than think of you."

"What did you, then?"

"I spoke of you."

"Spoke of me?—and to whom?" asked the prelate, in a tone in which it was impossible for him to conceal his emotion.

"To whom, if not to the queen?" But while saying these words, so precious to the cardinal, Jeanne was careful not to look at the prince that she might not seem to be at all anxious as to their effect.

Monsieur de Rohan's heart beat fast. "Ah!" said he, "dear Countess, tell me about it. Indeed I feel so much interest in everything that happens to you that I do not wish you to omit the slightest detail."

Jeanne smiled; she knew what interested the cardinal as well as he did himself. But as she had intended to relate punctiliously the whole story even without the cardinal's entreaty, she began deliberately, pronouncing distinctly each syllable. She gave a full account of the interview, related all the conversation, and demonstrated by every word how by one of those happy accidents which make the fortune of courtiers, she had happened at Versailles under one of those strange circumstances which in one day may transform a stranger into an almost indispensable friend. In fact, Jeanne de La Motte had in one day been admitted to the knowledge of the misfortunes of the queen, of the impotency of royalty.

In this narration Monsieur de Rohan appeared to observe that part only which related to what the queen had said about Jeanne, while Jeanne lay stress upon what the queen had said about Monsieur de Rohan.

The narration was scarcely finished when a servant entered announcing supper. Jeanne invited the cardinal by a glance, the cardinal accepted by a sign. He offered his arm to the mistress of the house, who had so quickly become accustomed to her position as hostess, and they went into the dining-room.

When supper was over, when the cardinal had drunk deep draughts of hope and love from the story of the enchantress, twenty times begun, and as many times interrupted, he felt obliged to come to some sort of conclusion with this woman who held the hearts of sovereigns in her hand. For he remarked, with a surprise which amounted to terror, that instead of assuming airs, like

other women who are much sought after and who can render valuable services, she anticipated his wishes with a grace very different from that fierce haughtiness she had shown at the former supper, in the same house.

Jeanne, on this occasion, did the honors of her house as if she were mistress not only of herself but of others also. There was no embarrassment in her expression, no hesitation in her tone. Had she not been taking, all day, these lessons in aristocratic deportment by association with the flower of French nobility? Had not a queen without rival called her "dear countess"? Therefore the cardinal, a man of superior rank himself, did not attempt to resist this assumption of superior rank on the part of Jeanne. "Countess," he said, taking her hand, "there are two women in you."

"How so?" asked the countess.

"The one of yesterday and the one of to-day."

"And which does your Eminence prefer?"

"I do not know. I feel only that the one of this evening is an Armida, a Circe, something irresistible."

"And whom you will not attempt to resist, I hope, Monseigneur, prince though you are."

The prince slid from his seat and fell upon his knees before Madame de La Motte.

"You ask alms?" she said.

"And I expect you to grant me them."

"It is a day for gifts," replied Jeanne. "The Countess de Valois has taken her place, — she is a woman of the court; before long she will rank among the proudest women of Versailles. She can then open her hand and extend it to whomsoever she pleases."

"Even to a prince?" said Monsieur de Rohan.

"Even to a cardinal," replied Jeanne.

The cardinal imprinted a long and burning kiss upon that

pretty, rebellious hand, and after a glance and a smile from the countess, he rose. He then went into the antechamber and spoke a few words to his servant. Two minutes after could be heard the noise of the carriage as it rolled away. The countess looked up.

"Upon my word, Countess," said the cardinal, "I have burned my ships."

"And there is no great merit in that," replied the countess, "since you have reached port."

CHAPTER II.

MASKS AND FACES.

Long conversations are the blessed privilege of persons who have nothing further to tell each other. After the pleasure of being silent there is none greater than that of conversing carelessly. Two hours after the departure of the carriage, the cardinal and the countess had reached this point in their intercourse. The countess had yielded, the cardinal had conquered; and yet the cardinal was the slave, the countess was the victor.

Two men deceive each other while shaking hands; a man and a woman deceive each other with a kiss. But in this case each deceived the other only because the other wished to be deceived. Each had an end in view, for the attainment of which this intimacy was necessary. Each, then, had made a forward step.

The cardinal did not take the trouble to conceal his impatience. He very soon brought the conversation back to the subject of Versailles and the honors which there awaited the new favorite of the queen: "She is generous," he said, "and spares no pains to please those whom she likes. She has the rare gift of giving a little to a great many persons, and of giving much to a few friends."

"You think she is rich, then?" asked Madame de La Motte.

"She knows how to obtain resources with a word, a gesture, a smile. There has never been a minister except

Turgot, perhaps, who has had the courage to refuse the queen anything she asked."

"Well! *I* think she is not so rich as you imagine, poor queen, — or rather, poor woman!"

"Why do you think so?"

"Is a person rich who is obliged to endure privations?"

"Privations? Tell me about it, dear Jeanne."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* I will tell you what I have seen, nothing more, nothing less."

"Go on, I will listen."

"Imagine to yourself two terrible torments which this unhappy queen has endured."

"Two torments! Tell me what they are."

"Do you know what the longing of a woman is, my dear Prince?"

"No; but I wish that you would tell me what it is."

"Well, the queen has a desire which she cannot satisfy."

"For whom?"

"No, for what!"

"For what, then?"

"For a diamond necklace."

"Stay, I remember! Do you not allude to the diamonds of Boehmer and Bossange?"

"Precisely."

"Oh, that is an old story, Countess!"

"Old or new, is it not a real sorrow for a queen that she cannot possess what a mere favorite was so near obtaining? If Louis XV. had lived fifteen days longer, Jeanne Vaubernier would have possessed that which Marie Antoinette cannot have."

"Well, dear Countess, you are mistaken about this; these diamonds have been offered to the queen five or six times, and she has always refused them."

"Oh!"

"The king has offered them to her, and she has always refused to accept them;" and the cardinal told the story of the ship-of-war.

Jeanne listened eagerly, and when the cardinal had finished, "Well," she said, "what then?"

"What then?"

"Yes; what does that prove?"

"Why, that she did not wish for them, it seems to me."

Jeanne shrugged her shoulders. "You know what women are, you know the court, you know kings, and yet you allow yourself to be misled by such an answer?"

"Well, I prove that she refused."

"My dear Prince, that proves one thing; the queen thought she must utter a brilliant saying, a popular saying, and she uttered it."

"Good!" said the cardinal; "is that your faith in royal virtues? Ah, sceptic! Why, Saint Thomas was a believer in comparison with you."

"Sceptic or believer, I will affirm one thing."

"What is it?"

"That the queen had no sooner refused the necklace than she was seized with an insane desire to possess it."

"You are inventing these ideas, my dear; and in the first place, you must consider that with all her faults the queen has one great quality."

"What is it?"

"She is disinterested. She loves neither gold, nor silver, nor precious stones. She takes these minerals at their true value; to her a flower on her bosom is as precious as a diamond in her ear."

"I will not deny it. But I do maintain that at this moment she has a strong desire to put several diamonds about her neck."

"Oh, Countess, prove what you say!"

"Nothing will be more easy. I have just seen the necklace."

"You?"

"I; I have not only seen it, but I touched it."

"And where?"

"At Versailles."

"At Versailles?"

"Yes; where the jewellers took it to tempt the queen for the last time."

"And it is beautiful?"

"It is marvellous."

"Then you, who are a true woman, can understand how this necklace could possess one's thoughts."

"I can see how, on account of it, a woman might lose appetite and sleep."

"Alas! why have I not a ship to give to the king?"

"A ship?"

"Yes; he would give me the necklace. And if I once had it, you could eat and sleep peacefully."

"You are jesting?"

"No; I swear I am not."

"Well, I am going to tell you something which will astonish you very much."

"Say on."

"I would not have that necklace!"

"So much the better, Countess, for I could not give it to you."

"Alas! neither you nor any one else; indeed, the queen understands that, therefore she desires it."

"But I repeat to you that the king offered it to her."

Jeanne made a quick gesture, an almost impatient one. "And I tell you," she said, "that women are most pleased

with such presents when they are not given by persons who oblige them to accept them."

The cardinal regarded Jeanne more attentively. "I do not understand exactly," he said.

"So much the better, let us say no more about it. What is the necklace to you, since we cannot have it?"

"Oh, if I were the king, and you were the queen, I would oblige you to accept it!"

"Well, without being king, oblige the queen to take it, and see if it makes her as angry as you imagine."

The cardinal again looked at Jeanne. "Really," he said, "you are sure you are not mistaken; the queen has this desire?"

"An overwhelming desire. Listen, dear Prince; have you not told me, or have I heard in some other way, that you would not be sorry to become prime minister?"

"It is very possible that I may have said that, Countess."

"Well, let us wager, my dear Prince —"

"What?"

"That the queen would make a minister of that man who should manage to have this necklace placed upon her toilet-table within eight days."

"Oh, Countess!"

"I say what I say. Would you rather have me keep it to myself?"

"Oh, never!"

"Besides, what I say does not concern you. It is very clear that you would not sacrifice a million and a half to a royal caprice. Upon my word, that would be paying too dear for a portfolio which you might have for nothing, and which is your due. Therefore, consider all that I have said as mere chatter. I am like the parrots; I have been dazzled by the sun, and keep saying to myself that

'it is hot.' Ah, Monseigneur, how severe a trial is a day of favor to a little country girl! These rays of light, — one must be an eagle like you to gaze at them serenely."

The cardinal became thoughtful.

"Come, come," said Jeanne, "you think so ill of me, you find me so vulgar and so wretched, that you do not deign even to speak to me."

"Ah, you are mistaken!"

"I have judged the queen by myself."

"Countess!"

"How could I help it? I thought she wished for the diamonds, because she sighed while looking at them; I believed it, because in her place I should have desired them. Excuse my weakness."

"You are an adorable woman, Countess. You have both tenderness of heart and strength of mind, — a rare combination; there is at times in you so little of the woman that I am afraid of you. You are at other times so adorable a woman that I bless Heaven for you, and I bless you also;" and the gallant cardinal emphasized this compliment by a kiss. "Come, let us talk no longer of these things," he said.

"So be it," murmured Jeanne to herself, "but I think the hook has caught in the flesh."

But although the cardinal said, "Let us talk no more about it," he continued, "And do you think it is Boehmer who has returned to the charge?"

"With Bossange, yes," answered Madame de La Motte, innocently.

"Bossange, — let me see," said the cardinal, as if he were trying to recall something; "is he not his partner?"

"Yes; a tall, thin man."

"That is he. And he lives —"

"He must live somewhere near the Quai de la Ferraille or Quai de l'École, I do not know exactly; but at all events, somewhere in the neighborhood of the Pont Neuf."

"The Pont Neuf, — you are right; I have read those names over some door, while driving in my carriage."

"The fish bites more and more," murmured Jeanne to herself. And she was right, for the prey had swallowed even the hook.

The next morning, on leaving the little house in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, the cardinal drove directly to the house of Boehmer. He intended to remain incognito, but Boehmer and Bossange were the jewellers to the court, and at the first words he spoke, they addressed him as "Monseigneur."

"Well, yes, 'Monseigneur,'" said the cardinal; "but since you recognize me, try, at least, to prevent others from recognizing me."

"Monseigneur may rest easy. We await Monseigneur's orders."

"I have come to purchase the diamond necklace which you have shown to the queen."

"Indeed, we are very sorry, but Monseigneur is too late."

"Why so?"

"It is sold."

"It is impossible, since it was only yesterday that you offered it again to the queen."

"Who refused it again, Monseigneur, so that the old bargain stands."

"And with whom was that bargain made?" asked the cardinal.

"It is a secret, Monseigneur."

"Too many secrets, Monsieur Boehmer," and the cardinal rose.

"But, Monseigneur —"

"I thought, Monsieur," continued the cardinal, "that a jeweller to the crown of France should be glad to sell in France these beautiful stones; prefer Portugal, if you please, Monsieur Boehmer."

"Monseigneur knows everything!" cried the jeweller.

"Well, what is there surprising in that?"

"But if Monseigneur knows all, he can have learned it only from the queen."

"And what if it were so?" said Monsieur de Rohan, without denying the supposition, which flattered his self-love.

"Oh, that would change everything entirely, Monsieur."

"Explain yourself, I do not understand."

"Will Monseigneur allow me to speak with perfect freedom?"

"Speak."

"Well, then, the queen wants our necklace."

"Do you think so?"

"We know it."

"Ah! why, then, does she not buy it?"

"Why? because she has refused to accept it from the king, and to retract that refusal, which has won for her Majesty so much praise, would make her seem capricious."

"The queen is above considering what might be said about her."

"Yes, when the people speak, or even the courtiers; but when it is the king who speaks —"

"You know very well that the king wished to give this necklace to the queen."

"Yes, but he was very ready with his thanks when she declined it."

"What, then, does Monsieur Boehmer conclude?"

"That the queen would be glad to have the necklace without seeming to purchase it."

"Well, you are mistaken, Monsieur," said the cardinal; "there is no foundation for what you say."

"That is unfortunate, Monseigneur, for that would have afforded us our only ground for breaking our agreement with the Portuguese ambassador."

The cardinal reflected. Seeing that he was in the man's power, "Monsieur," said he, "you may suppose, if you please, that the queen desires to possess your necklace."

"That changes everything, Monseigneur. I can break any bargain when there is a question of giving preference to the queen."

"What is your price for the necklace?"

"Fifteen hundred thousand francs."

"On what terms?"

"Portugal was to pay me a sum on account, and I was to carry the necklace to Lisbon, where the balance was to be paid at once."

"That mode of payment is not practicable with us, Monsieur Boehmer; you shall have a sum on account if it is reasonable."

"A hundred thousand francs."

"They can be found. As to the rest?"

"Your Eminence would wish for time," said Boehmer. "With the guarantee of your Eminence everything is feasible. Only, delay involves a loss. For observe, Monsieur, in a matter of this importance the figures increase of themselves, and rapidly. The interest on fifteen hundred thousand francs, at five per cent, is seventy-five thousand francs, and five per cent is ruinous to tradesmen. Ten per cent is the least they ought to accept."

"That would be one hundred and fifty thousand francs by your calculation?"

"Why, yes, Monseigneur."

"Suppose you sell the necklace for sixteen hundred thousand francs, Monsieur Boehmer, and divide the payment of the fifteen hundred thousand francs which will remain to be paid into three installments, payment to be completed within a year. Is it agreed?"

"Monseigneur, we should lose fifty thousand francs by that bargain."

"I do not think so, Monsieur. If you should receive, to-morrow, fifteen hundred thousand francs, you would not know what to do with them; a jeweller does not buy an estate of that value."

"There are two of us, Monseigneur, — my partner and myself."

"That is true, but no matter; it will be more convenient for both to receive five hundred thousand francs every four months, — that is, two hundred and fifty thousand francs apiece."

"Monseigneur forgets that these diamonds do not belong to us; if they did, we should be rich enough to wait."

"To whom, then, do they belong?"

"Why, to perhaps ten different creditors. We procured some from Hamburg, some from Naples, one from Buenos Ayres, two from Moscow. Our creditors are waiting for the sale of the necklace to be paid. The profit we shall make is all that will be ours; but alas! Monseigneur, since we have had this unfortunate necklace on hand, which is about two years, we have already lost two hundred thousand francs in interest. You may judge what the profits will be."

Monsieur de Rohan interrupted Boehmer. "After all," he said, "I have not seen the necklace."

"True, Monseigneur, here it is," and Boehmer, with all the usual precautions, exhibited the precious jewels.

"Superb!" cried the cardinal, touching affectionately the clasp which must have pressed the queen's neck. When his fingers had sought, to his satisfaction, any sympathetic effluence which might still be clinging to the stones, "Is it a bargain?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur; and I must now go to the embassy to retract my promise."

"I did not know that there was an ambassador from Portugal in Paris, just now."

"Indeed, Monseigneur, Monsieur de Souza is here now; he came incognito."

"To negotiate this business," said the cardinal, laughing.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Oh, poor Souza! I know him well. Poor Souza!" said the cardinal, laughing still more heartily. Monsieur Boehmer thought he ought to join in the hilarity of his customer. They amused themselves for some time over this jewel-casket, at the expense of Portugal.

Monsieur de Rohan was about to leave. Boehmer stopped him. "Will Monseigneur tell me how this matter is to be arranged?" he asked.

"Why, simply enough."

"With Monseigneur's intendant?"

"No; with myself only, — you will deal only with me."

"And when?"

"To-morrow."

"And the hundred thousand francs."

"I will bring them here — to-morrow."

"Very well, Monseigneur."

"And the notes?"

"I will sign them here, to-morrow."

"Nothing could be better, Monseigneur."

"And as you are a man used to secrets, Monsieur Boehmer, remember that you now possess an important one."

"Monseigneur, I feel it, and will merit your confidence as well as that of the queen," he added slyly.

Monsieur de Rohan blushed, and went away somewhat disturbed but happy, like every man who ruins himself in the ardor of passion.

The next day Monsieur Boehmer went to the hôtel of the Portuguese ambassador. Just at the moment he knocked at the gate, Monsieur Beausire was going through some accounts with Monsieur Ducorneau, while Don Manoel was discussing with the valet, his partner, a new scheme of adventure.

Since Monsieur Boehmer's last visit to the Rue de la Jussienne, the hôtel had undergone some transformations. The whole of the household, having arrived as we have said in two post-chaises, had been established according to the different positions they were to fill in the house of the new ambassador. It must be confessed that the partners, in distributing among themselves the several offices, — which they filled admirably, — had thus an opportunity to watch the progress of their own affairs; and this always imparts a certain degree of courage even in the performance of the most disagreeable tasks.

Monsieur Ducorneau was charmed to find an ambassador so free from national prejudice as to have formed his whole establishment of Frenchmen. Thus it was that while going over accounts with Monsieur de Beausire, he entered into conversation with that gentleman, full of praise of the head of the embassy.

"The Souzas, you see," said Beausire, "are not like those old Portuguese of the fourteenth century, many of whom you can see now in our provinces. No, they are gentlemen, travellers, very rich, who might be kings if the fancy took them."

"But it does not take them," said Monsieur Ducorneau.

"But why should it, Monsieur? With a certain number of millions and the name of a prince, is not one equal to a king?"

"Why, these are philosophical doctrines, Monsieur," said Ducorneau, surprised; "I should not expect such opinions concerning equality from a diplomatist."

"We are an exception," replied Beausire, rather annoyed at the anachronism he had committed; "without being a follower of Voltaire, or an Armenian after the manner of Rousseau, a man may know the natural theories of the inequality of conditions and forces."

"Do you know," cried the chancellor, enthusiastically, "that it is fortunate that Portugal is a small state?"

"Eh! why?"

"Because with such men at its head, it would soon become powerful, Monsieur."

"Oh, you flatter us, dear Chancellor. No, we are philosophical politicians. What you say is specious, but not pertinent. But enough of this. There are one hundred and eight thousand francs in the box, you said?"

"Yes, Monsieur, one hundred and eight thousand francs."

"And no debts?"

"Not a sou."

"That is exemplary. Give me the memorandum if you please."

"Here it is. But when is the presentation to take place? I must tell you that it is the subject of a general curiosity, of endless comments, — I might almost say of anxiety."

"Ah! ah!"

"Yes, from time to time people are seen prowling about the hôtel as if the gates were of glass through which they could see."

"People! do you mean the people in the neighborhood?"

"And others; the mission of the ambassador being a secret one, you may be sure that the police will soon interest themselves in ascertaining its object."

"I have thought as you do," said Beausire, somewhat uneasy.

"See, Monsieur," said Ducorneau, taking Beausire to the grating of a window which looked on the street, "look, do you see that man in an old brown coat?"

"Yes, I see him."

"How he watches, eh?"

"That is true! What do you think that man is?"

"How should I know? One of Monsieur de Crosne's spies, perhaps."

"Probably."

"Between ourselves, Monsieur, Monsieur de Crosne is not the equal of Monsieur de Sartines. Did you know Monsieur de Sartines?"

"No, Monsieur, no."

"Oh! he would have found out all about you long ago. It is true you take precautions —"

A bell rang.

"The ambassador calls me," said Beausire, hurriedly, for the conversation was becoming embarrassing; and opening the door quickly he knocked down two of the partners, who, one with a pen behind his ear, the other with a broom in his hand, — the one a servant of the fourth rank, the other a footman, — had thought the conversation protracted enough to have a serious meaning, and were trying to share in it by the sense of hearing.

Beausire concluded that he was under suspicion, and resolved to exercise greater vigilance. He continued on his way toward the ambassador's room, after giving a friendly grasp of the hand to his two associates.

CHAPTER III.

BEAUSIRE ACTS FOR HIMSELF.

Don Manoel y Souza was less yellow than usual, — that is to say, his face was red. He had just had a troublesome explanation with the valet; in fact, the explanation was still pending. When Beausire entered, the two gamecocks were plucking each other's last feathers.

"Come, Monsieur de Beausire," said the valet, "you shall decide between us."

"On what subject?" asked Beausire, who assumed the manner of an arbitrator, after exchanging a glance with the ambassador, his natural ally.

"You know," said the valet, "that Monsieur Boehmer is coming to-day to conclude the sale of the necklace?"

"Yes; I am aware of it."

"And that the one hundred thousand francs are to be paid over to him?"

"Yes; I know that also."

"These one hundred thousand francs are the property of the association, are they not?"

"Who doubts it?"

"Ah! Monsieur de Beausire is of my opinion," said the valet, turning toward Manoel.

"Wait, wait!" said the Portuguese.

"I agree with you only on that one point," said Beausire, — "that the one hundred thousand francs belong to the association."

"That is all that I claim. It follows that the safe in which they are kept should not be placed in the only office of the embassy which adjoins the chamber of the ambassador."

"Why not?" asked Beausire.

"And the ambassador," continued the valet, "ought to give each of us a key to that safe."

"By no means," said the Portuguese.

"Your reasons?"

"Ah, yes, your reasons?" said Beausire.

"I am distrusted," said the Portuguese, stroking his beard. "It seems to me that if I am to be accused of an intention to rob the association, I may suspect the association of a wish to rob me. We are all alike."

"Agreed," said the valet; "and precisely for that reason we all have equal rights."

"Then, my dear fellow, if you wish equality to be observed here, you should have decided that all of us in turn should assume the rôle of ambassador. It would have made our position less trustworthy in the eyes of the public; but the associates would have felt more secure."

"In the first place, Monsieur," interrupted Beausire, "you are not acting the part of a loyal associate. Has not Señor Don Manoel an incontestable privilege, as the inventor of the scheme?"

"Ah, yes!" said the ambassador; "and Monsieur de Beausire shares it with me."

"Oh," replied the valet, "the thing once started, there is no more attention paid to privileges."

"Agreed; but attention to proper conduct should still be continued."

"I am not alone in making this demand," murmured the valet, somewhat ashamed. "All our comrades think the same."

"And they are wrong," replied the Portuguese.

"They are wrong," said Beausire.

The valet looked up. "I was wrong myself," he said spitefully, "to ask Monsieur de Beausire's opinion. Of course the secretary would side with the ambassador."

"Monsieur," said Beausire, with astonishing coolness, "you are a knave, whose ears I would cut off if you had any left; but they have been clipped too many times."

"What do you say?" said the valet, drawing himself up.

"We are here by ourselves," said Beausire, "in the ambassador's cabinet, and can settle this business among ourselves. Now, you have just insulted me by saying that I have an understanding with Don Manoel."

"And you have insulted me," said the Portuguese, coldly, coming to the assistance of Beausire.

"And I demand satisfaction, Monsieur."

"Oh, I am no fighter!" cried the valet.

"So I see," replied Beausire; "consequently, you shall be beaten, Monsieur."

"Help!" cried the latter, already seized by Oliva's lover, and almost choked by the Portuguese.

But just as the two chiefs were about to take justice into their own hands, the bell from below announced a visitor.

"Let him alone," said Don Manoel.

"And let him attend to his duty," added Beausire.

"The comrades shall know this," replied the valet, readjusting his dress.

"Oh, tell them what you please! We shall know how to answer for ourselves."

"Monsieur Boehmer!" cried the guard, from below.

"Well, that will settle everything, my dear fellow," said Beausire, giving his adversary a tap on the nape of the neck. "We shall have no more contests about the one hundred thousand francs, since they will disappear with Monsieur Boehmer. Now put on your best behavior as our *valet-de-chambre*."

The valet went out grumbling, and assumed his humble air, in order properly to introduce the crown-jeweller. After he had left the room, Beausire and the Portuguese exchanged a second glance as significant as the first.

Boehmer entered, followed by Bossange. The faces of both expressed humility and embarrassment, which the keen observers of the embassy saw with anxiety. While they were taking the seats offered by Beausire, the latter continued his scrutiny, watching at the same time the eye of Don Manoel, to keep up a correspondence between them. Manoel assumed his dignified and official demeanor; Boehmer took the initiative in this difficult situation, and explained that political reasons of great importance would prevent them from fulfilling their contract.

Manoel cried out angrily; Beausire gave a "hem!" Monsieur Boehmer became more and more embarrassed.

Don Manoel remarked to him that the bargain had been completed, and that the money on account was ready. Boehmer persisted.

The ambassador, still interpreted by Beausire, replied that his Government had been apprised of the conclusion of the bargain, and that to break it off was an insult to her Majesty.

Monsieur Boehmer said that he had weighed well the importance of these considerations; but to return to his former plan would be impossible.

Beausire refused to accept the retraction; he declared to Boehmer that his conduct was that of a dishonorable business man.

Bossange then took upon himself to defend the honor of trade, thus attacked in his own person and that of his partner; but he was not eloquent.

Beausire interrupted him with this single remark, "You have found a higher bidder."

The jewellers, who did not know much about politics, and who had a very high opinion of diplomacy in general, and Portuguese diplomatists in particular, colored, thinking their motives had been discovered.

Beausire saw that he had hit the nail on the head, and as he wished that this business should be carried through, — since there was a fortune in it, — he pretended to consult his ambassador in Portuguese. Then he said to the jewellers, "Gentlemen, you have had a more advantageous offer. Nothing could be more natural; it proves that the diamonds were offered us at a fair value. Well, her Portuguese Majesty would not wish to obtain a good bargain at the expense of worthy tradesmen. Will you take fifty thousand francs more?"

Boehmer shook his head.

"One hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty thousand francs," continued Beausire, determined to offer a million more rather than lose his share of the fifteen hundred thousand francs.

The jewellers, dazzled by this offer, were for a moment somewhat embarrassed; then, having consulted together, "No, Monsieur," they said to Beausire, "do not take the trouble to tempt us; a will more powerful than ours compels us to sell the necklace in this country. You understand, without doubt, that it is not we who refuse; therefore do not be angry with us. It is from some one

greater than ourselves, greater than you, that the opposition comes."

Beausire and Manoel had nothing to say to this. On the contrary, they affected politeness and tried to appear indifferent. They were so intent upon this that they did not observe the valet, who was listening at the door to discover, if possible, what this business was from which they wished to exclude him. This worthy associate was, however, unfortunate enough to slip and fall against the door, making a loud noise.

Beausire ran to the antechamber. "What are you doing here, you rascal?" he cried.

"Monsieur, I bring the morning despatches."

"Good," said Beausire, "now go."

These despatches were letters from Portugal, generally unimportant, but which, passing through their hands before going to Ducorneau, often gave them useful information about the affairs of the embassy.

On hearing the word "despatches" the jewellers rose from their seats much relieved, like persons who receive permission to withdraw after an embarrassing audience. They were allowed to depart, and the valet was ordered to accompany them to the court-yard.

He had scarcely left the staircase when Don Manoel and Beausire, exchanging glances of the kind which promise immediate action, approached each other.

"Well!" said Don Manoel, "the affair has failed."

"Completely," said Beausire.

"Out of one hundred thousand francs, paltry spoils, we shall each have eight thousand four hundred francs."

"Not worth the trouble," replied Beausire.

"It is not. But there in that safe," and he pointed toward the safe so eagerly coveted by the valet, — "there in that safe are one hundred and eight thousand francs."

"Fifty-four thousand each."

"Well! enough said," replied Don Manoel. "Let us share it."

"So be it, but the valet will not leave us a moment if he knows the affair has failed."

"I will think of some way," said Don Manoel, in a peculiar tone.

"And I have found one already," said Beausire.

"What is it?"

"This is it. The valet will soon return?"

"Yes."

"He will demand his share and that of his associates."

"Yes."

"We shall have the whole house on our hands."

"Yes."

"Let us call the valet as if to a secret conference; then leave me to act."

"I begin to understand," said Don Manoel; "go and meet him."

"I was just going to ask you to do so."

Neither would leave his *friend* alone with the box. Confidence is a rare jewel. Don Manoel replied that his dignity as ambassador prevented him from taking such a step.

"You are not an ambassador to him," said Beausire; "but no matter."

"You are going yourself?"

"No, I will call him from the window," and he hailed the valet from the window just as he was entering into conversation with the guard. The valet, hearing himself called, came up. He found the two leaders in the room next the one containing the safe. Beausire said to him with a smiling face, "I will wager that I know what you were saying to the guard."

"I?"

"Yes; you were telling him that the affair with Boehmer had failed."

"Upon my word, no."

"You lie."

"I swear to you that I was not."

"That is fortunate; for if you had spoken, you would have done a very foolish thing and lost a fine sum of money."

"How so?" cried the valet, in surprise; "what sum of money?"

"You must understand that we three alone possess the secret."

"That is true."

"And that consequently we three possess the one hundred and eight thousand francs, since the others believe that Boehmer and Bossange have carried away the money."

"*Morbleu!*" cried the valet, transported with joy, "that is true."

"Thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three francs, six sous apiece," said Manoel.

"More! more!" cried the valet; "there is a fraction of eight thousand francs."

"That is true," said Beausire. "Do you agree?"

"Do I agree!" said the valet, rubbing his hands, "I should think so. That is as it should be; that is talking."

"That is talking like a knave," said Beausire, in a voice of thunder. "I said that you were only a rogue. Come, Don Manoel, you who are so strong, seize this fellow for me, and let us show him up to our associates."

"Mercy, mercy!" cried the wretched man, "I was only jesting."

"Come, come!" continued Beausire, "into the dark

room with him until we can devise some punishment for him."

"Mercy!" cried the valet, again.

"Take care," said Beausire, who had seized the perfidious valet, — "take care that Monsieur Ducorneau does not hear you!"

"If you do not let me go," said the valet, "I will denounce you all!"

"And I will strangle you!" said Don Manoel, in a voice full of anger, pushing the valet toward a closet near by. "Send away Monsieur Ducorneau," he whispered in Beausire's ear.

The latter did not wait for a repetition of the order; he went quickly into the next room while Don Manoel was shutting up the valet in the dark closet.

A minute passed, but Beausire had not returned.

An idea struck Don Manoel: he was alone and the safe was not ten paces away; to open it, to take from it the one hundred and eight thousand francs, to jump out of a window and run through the garden with his booty was but the work of two minutes to an experienced thief. Don Manoel calculated that Beausire would require five minutes at least to send away Ducorneau and return to the room. He ran toward the door of the room which contained the safe, and found it bolted. He was strong and skilful; he could have opened the door of a city with a watch-key.

"Beausire distrusted me," he thought, "because I alone have the key, and has bolted the door." He forced back the bolt with his sword. On reaching the safe he uttered a terrible cry. There stood the chest with gaping mouth and empty!

Beausire, who had a second key, had entered by another door, and had carried away the money. Don Manoel ran

like a madman to the porter's lodge, where he found the guard singing. He found that Beausire had been gone just five minutes.

When the Portuguese by his cries and groans had informed the whole household of what had happened; when to obtain a witness, he had released the valet, — it was only to find them all incredulous and furious. They accused him of being an accomplice of Beausire, who would deliver to Don Manoel his share of the spoils.

There was no longer any mystery; all had unmasked, and worthy Monsieur Ducorneau could not understand with what sort of people he had been associated. He almost fainted when he saw these diplomatists preparing to hang Don Manoel, who could do nothing to help himself.

"Hang Monsieur de Souza!" cried the chancellor, "but that is high treason; take care!"

They determined to throw him into the cellar, fearing his cries would be heard.

At that moment three loud knocks at the door made the associates tremble, and immediately silence was restored among them. The knocks were repeated. Then a shrill voice called out in Portuguese: "Open! in the name of the ambassador from Portugal!"

"The ambassador!" murmured all the rascals, scattering in every direction through the hôtel, running through the gardens, climbing over the roofs and neighboring walls in headlong terror.

The real ambassador, who had in fact arrived, could not enter his own hôtel without the help of the police, who broke open the gate in the presence of an immense crowd, attracted by this curious spectacle.

Then a thorough search was made, and Monsieur Ducorneau was arrested and sent to the Châtelet.

Thus ended the adventure of the sham embassy from Portugal.

CHAPTER IV.

ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES.

BEAUSIRE, when he had cleared the gate, had run at the top of his speed through the Rue Coquilliere to the Rue Saint Honoré. Imagining that he was pursued, he had taken intricate turnings through the streets bordering on the corn-market called Halle aux Blés. After a few moments he felt quite sure that no one could have followed him; he was also quite sure that he was exhausted, and that a good race-horse could not have made better speed than he had made. He sat down on a bag of corn in the Rue de Viarmes, which runs along one side of the market, and pretended to be examining attentively the column of Médicis, which Bachaumont had bought to save it from the hammer of the demolishers, and had presented to the city.

The fact is that Monsieur de Beausire was looking neither at the column of Monsieur Philibert Delorme nor at the sundial with which it had been adorned by Monsieur de Pingré. He was simply trying to recover his breath. When, after some moments, he had succeeded in doing so he gave himself up to pleasing meditations. "Now, at last," he thought, "my dream is fulfilled; I am owner of a fortune. I shall now be able to become an entirely respectable man; it seems to me that I am already growing fat. I shall make Oliva as respectable as I shall be myself. She is handsome, and she is simple in her tastes. She will not dislike a life of retirement in the country, on a fine farm, which we will call our estate, near a small city where we shall easily pass as

of noble rank. Nicole is good; she has but two faults, — idleness and pride."

Only those! Poor Beausire! — two deadly sins!

"And with these infirmities, which I shall respect, — I, the Beausire of doubtful reputation, — I shall have gained an accomplished wife."

Beausire wiped his brow, assured himself that the stolen money was still safe in his pocket, and then, feeling more comfortable in body and in mind, he again reflected. They would not look for him in the Rue de Viarmes, but still they would look for him. The gentlemen of the embassy were not likely to lose, with cheerful resignation, their share of the spoils. They would probably divide themselves into several parties, and would begin by exploring the residence of the thief. There lay all the difficulty. In that house lived Oliva. They would inform her of what had happened, would maltreat her, perhaps, — nay, they might push their cruelty so far as to take her for a hostage. For why should they not speculate on his passion for her?

Beausire was near losing his wits as he contemplated these dangers. Love prevailed over all other considerations. He would not allow any one to touch the object of his love. He started off with the swiftness of an arrow toward the Rue Dauphine.

Beausire relied with great confidence on the rapidity of his movements; his enemies, however active they might be, could not be in advance of him. But for greater assurance he threw himself into a fiacre, to the driver of which he showed a six-franc piece, saying, "To the Pont Neuf;" and the horses flew over the ground.

The evening was closing in. When the carriage had reached the open space behind the statue of Henri IV. Beausire ventured to put his head out of the window and

searched with eager eyes the Rue Dauphine. He had had some experience with the police, and had for ten years been accustomed to know the police agents by sight, that he might the more easily avoid them when occasion required. He noticed two men on the end of the bridge toward the Rue Dauphine who, standing some distance apart, were gazing into that street with every appearance of interest. These men were spies.

It was by no means unusual to see spies on the Pont Neuf; for there was a proverb to the effect that in order to see at the same time a prelate, a woman of the town, and a white horse it was necessary only to go to the Pont Neuf. And as white horses, clerical habiliments, and women of the town are always objects of interest to the police, the presence of these two spies did not appear to Beausire to have any special significance. He alighted from the carriage, made himself appear humpbacked, and limping to disguise himself still further, pushed through the crowd and entered the Rue Dauphine. He saw there no sign of what he had apprehended. He could see already the house at whose windows his star, the beautiful Oliva, had so often appeared to him. The windows were closed. Doubtless she was lying on the sofa, or was reading a wicked book, or was enjoying some delicate article of food. Suddenly he thought he saw a soldier lurking in the alley opposite the house; nay, he saw a soldier at one of the windows!

Thoroughly alarmed, Beausire nevertheless had the courage to pass by the house and observe it carefully. What a spectacle! The passage-way was filled with soldiers of the Paris guard, and among them was a commissary from the Châtelet, dressed in black. They were — as Beausire's rapid glance discovered — perplexed and

disappointed. Evidently they had failed in their object, whatever it may have been.

Beausire said to himself that Monsieur de Crosne, having received information against him, had undertaken to have him arrested, and had found only Oliva. *Inde iræ!* hence the signs of disappointment he had noticed. Certainly, if Beausire had been in ordinary circumstances he would have thrown himself into the midst of those soldiers, crying like Nisus, "Here I am! here I am! it is I who have done all!" But the idea that they would get hold of the hundred thousand francs, and boast of their success for the remainder of their lives; the idea that his bold and adroit achievement should have been performed only for the advantage of the police, — this idea prevailed over all his scruples, and stifled even the anxiety of love. "Let me think," he said to himself, "I allow them to capture me; I allow them to take the money. I do no good to Oliva, and I ruin myself. I prove to her that I love her like a madman; but I give her the right to say, 'You are a fool; you should have loved me less, and saved me.' Decidedly the better way is to make good use of my legs and place this money where it will be safe; for money is the root of everything, — liberty, happiness, philosophy."

Thus meditating, Beausire pressed the bank-notes to his heart, and directed his course toward the Luxembourg; for during the last hour he was under the guidance of instinct, and since he had been a hundred times to the Luxembourg Gardens in search of Oliva, he instinctively at this moment went in that direction. For a man so proud of his logic, this was a poor reason.

In fact, the police, who knew the habits of thieves as well as Beausire knew the habits of the police, would naturally have gone to the Luxembourg in search of Beausire. But it was decided that Monsieur de

Crosne should have nothing to do with Beausire at this time.

Nicole's lover had hardly turned the corner of the Rue Saint Germain des Prés, when he was nearly run over by an elegant carriage moving rapidly toward the Rue Dauphine. Beausire had just time enough to dodge the pole, — thanks to an agility which is peculiar to the true Parisian. He did not indeed escape the oath of the coachman, or his whip; but the proprietor of a hundred thousand francs will not stop for trifles that concern his dignity, especially when he thinks the police are after him.

Beausire, then, leaped aside, and in doing so he saw in that carriage Oliva and a very handsome man in animated conversation. He uttered a slight cry, which, however, only quickened the speed of the horses. He would have followed the carriage, but it was going toward the Rue Dauphine, the only street in Paris which Beausire was at that moment anxious to avoid. And besides, he began to doubt if he had really seen her; it was a phantom, an hallucination. How could Oliva be riding in that carriage? And besides, had not the police arrested her in the Rue Dauphine?

Poor Beausire, at the end of his resources, mentally and physically, resumed his course toward the Luxembourg, crossed the already deserted garden, and made his way to a small inn outside the barrier, the hostess of which had been friendly to him. There he installed himself. He hid his money under a tile in the chamber-floor, placed the foot of his bedstead on the tile, and went to bed swearing and perspiring. He, however, intermingled with his oaths thanks to Mercury for favors already assured. He was sure that the police would not find him. He was sure that no one would rob him of his money. He was sure that Nicole, even if she were arrested, was guilty of

no crime, and that the time when innocent persons were perpetually imprisoned had gone by. He was sure, in short, that his one hundred and eight thousand francs would deliver Oliva, his inseparable companion, from whatever prison might be closed on her. There remained his companions in the embassy; with them his account would not be so easy to settle. He resolved to leave them all in France, as soon as Oliva should have regained her liberty, and set out for Switzerland, the land of liberty and good morals.

Nothing of all that Beausire meditated upon, as he drank his warm wine, took place according to his anticipations; it was so written. Men are almost always wrong in imagining they see what they do not see; they are even more in error when they imagine that they do not see what is really before their eyes.

We are about to explain this to the reader.

CHAPTER V.

OLIVA CHANGES HER RESIDENCE.

If Monsieur Beausire had made use of his eyes, which were excellent, instead of his imagination, which was always dull, he would have spared himself much regret and many mistakes. It was, in fact, Oliva who sat in the carriage, by the side of a man whom he would have recognized if he had looked at him more attentively. Oliva had gone that morning, as usual, to take a walk in the Luxembourg Gardens, and there she had met the strange friend whose acquaintance she had made the day of the Opera-ball.

She was just leaving a restaurant, bestowing a gracious smile on the proprietor, whose constant customer she was, when Cagliostro, emerging from one of the walks, ran up to her and caught her by the arm. She uttered a little cry.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"Why, home, of course, to the Rue Dauphine."

"Just what the people want who are there waiting for you," rejoined the unknown nobleman.

"People — who are waiting for me — how can that be? No one is waiting for me."

"Oh, yes; a dozen visitors at least."

"A dozen visitors!" cried Oliva, laughing; "you might as well say a whole regiment."

"Upon my word, if it had been possible to send a regiment to the Rue Dauphine, it would have been done."

"You astonish me."

"I should astonish you more, if I should allow you to go to the Rue Dauphine."

"Why?"

"Because you would be arrested, my dear."

"Arrested, I?"

"Assuredly; these twelve visitors who are waiting for you are archers sent by Monsieur de Crosne."

Oliva shuddered; certain persons are always afraid of certain things. Nevertheless, after a careful inspection of her conscience, "I have done nothing," she said; "why should I be arrested?"

"Why should any woman be arrested? For some intrigue, some foolishness."

"I have no intrigues."

"But you may have had them."

"Oh, perhaps!"

"They may be wrong in wishing to arrest you, but the fact remains that they do wish to arrest you. Will you go to the Rue Dauphine, notwithstanding?"

Oliva stopped, pale and agitated. "You play with me as a cat plays with a mouse," she said. "Come, if you know anything, tell it to me. Perhaps it is Beausire they want?" and she cast upon Cagliostro a supplicating look.

"Perhaps. I suspect his conscience is less clear than yours."

"Poor fellow!"

"Pity him, if you like; but if he is arrested, there is no need of your following his example."

"What interest have you in protecting me? Why should you concern yourself about me? Come, now," she said boldly, "it is not natural for a man like you —"

"Do not go on, you would say something foolish; and

time is precious, because the agents of Monsieur de Crosne, not finding you at home, are quite capable of coming here to look for you."

"Here! do they know that I am here?"

"Not a very difficult thing to know; I knew it! Let me finish what I was saying. As I do take an interest in your person and wish you well, the rest need not concern you. Come, let us go to the Rue d'Enfer. My carriage is waiting for you there. Ah! you doubt still?"

"Yes."

"Well! we will do a very imprudent thing, but which will convince you once for all, I hope. We will drive by your house in my carriage, and when you shall have seen these gentlemen of the police at a safe distance, yet near enough to judge of their intentions, then you will better appreciate my services." While saying this he had led Oliva to the Rue d'Enfer, where they entered the carriage. They were on their way to the Rue Dauphine, where Beausire had seen them. Certainly, if he had called out at that moment, if he had followed the carriage, Oliva would have done all in her power to reach him, in order to share his fate, whatever it might be. But Cagliostro saw the unfortunate man, and diverted Oliva's attention by pointing to the crowd which curiosity had already attracted to her door.

When Oliva perceived that her house was filled by the soldiers of the police, she threw herself into the arms of her protector in such despair that the heart of any other man but this man of iron would have been moved. He only pressed the hand of the young girl, and in order to conceal her lowered the blinds of the carriage.

"Save me! save me!" cried the poor girl, every little while.

"I promise to do so," he said.

"But if these police officers know everything, they will find me, after all."

"No, no; no one can discover you in the place to which you are going; for although they may come to your house to arrest you, they will not think of looking for you at my house."

"Oh," she said in terror, "at your house! we are going to your house?"

"You are mad," he replied; "I should think that you had forgotten our agreement. I am not your lover, my good girl, and do not wish to become so."

"Then it is a prison you are offering me?"

"If you prefer the hospital of Saint Lazare, you are free to go there."

"Well," she replied, almost overcome with fear, "I trust myself to you; do with me as you please."

He took her to the Rue Neuve Saint Gilles, to that house in which he had received Philippe de Taverney. When he had established her in a small room in the second story, where she would be free from the observations of the servants, he said to her: "I assure you that you are yet to be happier than you will be in this place."

"Happy! How can I be happy?" said she, with a heavy heart. "Happy, without liberty, — without a garden in which to take my walks. It is so gloomy here. I shall die here."

"You are right," he said; "I do not wish you to want for anything. You would be uncomfortable here; and besides my servants would see you here at last, and might annoy you."

"Or betray me, perhaps," she added.

"As to that, fear nothing; but that you may have

perfect peace of mind, I will try to find you another abode."

Oliva seemed to be somewhat appeased by these promises. Besides, she was pleased with her new apartment, which contained every comfort, and entertaining books with which she could occupy herself.

Her protector left her, saying, "I do not mean to starve you, dear child. If you wish to see me, ring, and I will come immediately if I am at home, or if I am out, as soon as I return." He kissed her hand and left her.

"Ah," cried she, "above all, bring me some news of Beausire!"

"I will give it my first attention," he replied, as he closed the door of her room. Then, as he was descending the stairs, "It will be," he thought, "a profanation to put her in that house in the Rue Saint Claude. But it is important that no one should see her, and in that house no one will see her. At all events, it is better to run the risk of her discovery in that house in the Rue Saint Claude than in any other. Yes, I must make this sacrifice. I will extinguish the last spark of the fire of other days."

The count put on a heavy coat, took some keys from his secretary, from which he selected several which he gazed upon tenderly, and left his hôtel alone and on foot, taking his way along the Rue Saint Louis du Marais.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

Monsieur de Cagliostro went alone to the old house in the Rue Saint Claude which our readers cannot have quite forgotten. The night was coming on when he stopped opposite the gate, and but few persons could be seen on the boulevard. A dog was barking — or rather, howling — in the small enclosure of the convent, and a breath of warm wind bore to the Rue Saint Claude the melancholy tones of the clock of Saint Paul's striking the hour and three quarters. It was quarter of nine o'clock.

The count stopped, as we have said, opposite the carriage-gate, drew a great key from under his overcoat, and applied it to the lock. He had but to turn the key, and then push open the gate. But time had done its work; the wood was swollen at all the joints, and rust had eaten into the hinges. Grass had sprung up through the openings in the pavement, covering the lower part of the gate with its moist emanations. A sort of mastic, like that with which swallows build their nests, filled every space and covered the woodwork. Cagliostro pushed the gate with his hands, then with his shoulder, and finally overcame the resistance, and with a complaining creak the gate yielded before him.

When the gate was open the court-yard was seen, as desolate and moss-grown as an abandoned cemetery. Cagliostro closed the gate behind him. No one had seen him enter, and surrounded as he was by high walls, no one could see him. He could therefore pause a moment

to recall his past life, face to face with his former abode. His life was desolate and void; his house was a deserted ruin. Of the twelve steps at the entrance, three only were still whole. Cagliostro ascended the steps, trembling under his feet, and by the aid of a second key entered the large antechamber. There he lighted the lantern he had brought with him. In the dining-room the side-tables had almost lost, through decay, their original forms; the tiles of the floor were slippery with slime. All the doors were open, allowing the imagination freely to penetrate those gloomy depths already visited by death. The count shuddered; for at the end of the salon, where formerly the stairway was approached, he heard a mysterious noise. In other times that noise would have announced a beloved presence, and would have summoned the master of that house, through all his senses, to life, hope, and happiness. That noise, now representing nothing, recalled all the vanished past.

With a frowning brow, and holding his breath, Cagliostro moved forward toward the statue of Harpocrates, near which was the spring by which formerly he opened the door of communication between the concealed and the unconcealed portions of the house. The spring was worked without difficulty, though the worm-eaten woodwork trembled around it. But hardly had the count placed his foot on the secret staircase, when again the strange noise was heard. He reached forward his lantern to discover its cause; he saw nothing but a large snake slowly descending the stairs, and lashing with its tail the sounding steps. The reptile looked calmly at Cagliostro, and glided through a hole in the woodwork and disappeared. It was, no doubt, the Genius of Solitude.

The count continued the ascent, attended on his way by a recollection, or to speak more precisely, by a pres-

ence. When the light outlined his moving shadow on the walls, it seemed to him that another was there, revived from the dead to join him in this visit to the mysterious abode. Thus going forward, dreaming as he went, he reached the movable tile which served as an entrance from Balsamo's armory to the perfumed retreat of Lorenza Feliciani. The walls were bare, the rooms empty. On the hearth was a large mass of ashes, in which sparkled a few particles of gold and silver. Those fine ashes, white and perfumed, were the ashes of Lorenza's furniture, which Balsamo had burned even to the last item. Cagliostro stooped and took up a pinch of the ashes, which he slowly and passionately absorbed with his breath. "If only," he murmured, "I could thus absorb a portion of that soul which in other days communicated with this dust!"

Cagliostro abandoned himself to these dreams. The man descended from the heights of philosophy to indulge for a little while in sentiments of the heart, beyond the domain of reason. After evoking the pleasing phantoms of solitude, and resigning them again to Heaven, and when he thought that he had done with human weakness, his eyes rested on an object still shining amid that ruin. He stooped and saw, in a groove in the floor and half-buried under the dust, a small silver arrow, which seemed as if recently dropped from a woman's hair.

The philosopher, the man of science, the prophet, the scorner of humanity, he who would even call Heaven to account with him, this man who had repressed so many sorrows within himself, and had drawn so many drops of blood from the hearts of others, — Cagliostro, the atheist, the charlatan, the mocking sceptic, picked up the silver arrow, pressed it to his lips, and being certain that no one could see him, he suffered a tear to rise to his eyelids as he murmured, "Lorenza!"

And this was all. There was a demon in that man. He had sought the struggle, and for his own happiness had fought it out. After ardently kissing that sacred relic he opened the window, passed his hand between the bars, and threw the bit of metal into the enclosure of the convent. Thus he punished himself for having yielded to emotions of the heart.

"Adieu!" he said to the insensible object which perhaps was lost to him forever. "Adieu, thou souvenir, sent to me doubtless to soften me, to unman me. Henceforth I will think only of the earth. Yes, this house is about to be profaned. What do I say? — it is profaned already. I have reopened the doors; I have brought light within its walls; I have looked into the interior of the tomb; I have trampled on the ashes of the dead. The house is already profaned, then. Let it be so altogether, and for some good purpose.

"A woman yet again will cross this court-yard; a woman will press her feet upon the stairs; a woman will perhaps sing under this roof where lingers yet the last sigh of Lorenza. So be it. All these profanations will have one sole aim, — the advancement of my cause."

He put down his lantern on one of the steps of the staircase. "All this staircase must come down," he said. "All the inside structure must be taken down. Mystery will take its flight. The house will continue to be a hiding-place, though no longer a sanctuary."

The count wrote hastily upon his tablets the following lines: —

To Monsieur Lenoir, my architect:

Clear up court-yard and vestibules. Repair coach-house and stables. Pull down the interior pavilion. Reduce the hôtel to two stories. Eight days.

"Now," said he, "let us see if the windows of the little countess are visible from here."

He approached a window on the second story. He could see from there the houses on the farther side of the Rue Saint Claude. Opposite, and at a distance of not more than sixty feet was the lodging occupied by Jeanne de La Motte.

"It is infallible," said Cagliostro; "the two women cannot fail to see each other." He took up his lantern and descended the stairs. An hour later he had returned home, and had sent his plan to the architect.

It remains to be said that on the next day fifty workmen invaded the hôtel; that the sound of the hammer, the saw, and the pickaxe were heard in every quarter; that the grass, piled up in a corner, was beginning to smoke; and that in the evening the pedestrian returning home, faithful to his habit of daily observation, saw in the court-yard a large rat hanging by one leg from a hoop, surrounded by a number of workmen who were making fun of its grizzly mustache and venerable rotundity. That silent tenant of the hôtel had been buried in his hole by the fall of a large stone. Half-dead when the stone was raised by a crane, it had been seized by the tail, and sacrificed to the amusement of the young Auvergnese mixers of plaster. Either through mortification or through asphyxia the rat had died under that treatment. The pedestrian pronounced over it this funeral oration: "Here is one who was happy for ten years. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

In eight days the house had been restored, as Cagliostro had directed.

CHAPTER VII.

JEANNE MANAGES THE CARDINAL.

THE Cardinal de Rohan, two days after his visit to Boehmer, received the following note :—

"His Eminence Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan knows, doubtless, where he is to take supper to-night."

"From the little countess," he said, noting the perfume of the paper; "I will go."

Among the lackeys in Jeanne's service she had noticed one with black hair, brown eyes, and a complexion of the dark hue which indicates the bilious temperament. She inferred from these signs that he was active, intelligent, and self-reliant. She sent for him, and in a short time obtained from him the information she sought. The lackey reported to her that his Eminence had gone twice within two days to the house of Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange.

This was enough for Jeanne. Such a man as Monsieur de Rohan does not drive bargains. Shrewd tradesmen like Boehmer do not let a purchaser go away without buying. The necklace must be sold, — sold by Boehmer, bought by Monsieur de Rohan! And the latter had not said a word about it to his confidante, to his mistress! The indication was a serious one. Jeanne knitted her brows, bit her thin lips, and sent to the cardinal the note we have read.

Monsieur de Rohan came in the evening. He sent before him a basket of Tokay and other delicacies, just as he would have done if he had been going to take supper with La Guimard or Mademoiselle Dangeville.

Jeanne understood the significance of this attention, as of so many others. She allowed nothing the cardinal had sent to be served at the table; and when they were alone she opened the conversation in the following manner: "Indeed, Monseigneur," she said, "there is one thing which pains me very much."

"Oh, what is that, Countess?" said Monsieur de Rohan, with that affectation of anxiety which is not an expression of real alarm.

"Well, Monseigneur! the cause of my grief is the discovery not that you no longer love me, but that you never have loved me."

"Oh, Countess, what is that you say?"

"Do not excuse yourself, Monseigneur; that would be time lost."

"For me," said the cardinal, gallantly.

"No, for me," replied Madame de La Motte, quickly. "Besides —"

"Oh, Countess!" said the cardinal.

"Do not be uneasy, Monseigneur; I am quite indifferent about it."

"Whether I love you or not?"

"Yes."

"And why are you so indifferent?"

"Because I do not love you."

"Countess, do you know that what you have done me the honor to say to me is not at all kind?"

"Indeed, it is true that we are not beginning with pleasant sayings; but it is a fact which may as well be acknowledged between us."

"What fact?"

"That I have never loved you more, Monseigneur, than you have loved me."

"Oh, as for me, you must not say that!" cried the prince, in a tone which was almost truthful. "I have had for you much affection, Countess. Do not put me in the same position with yourself."

"Come, Monseigneur, let us esteem each sufficiently to speak the truth."

"And what is the truth?"

"There is between us a tie very different from that of love."

"What is it?"

"Interest."

"Interest? Fie, Countess!"

"Monseigneur, I will say to you as the Norman peasant said of the gibbet to his son: 'If you dislike it yourself, do not give others a distaste for it.' Fie on interest, Monsieur? how you do go on!"

"Well, then, Countess, let us suppose that we are guided by interest; in what way can I serve your interests and you mine?"

"In the first place, Monseigneur, and before everything else, I have a notion to pick a quarrel with you."

"Do so, Countess."

"You have shown a want of confidence in me, a want of esteem."

"I!—and in what, if you please?"

"In what? Do you deny that after having skilfully dragged from me details which I was dying to give you—"

"Of what, Countess?"

"Of the desire of a certain great lady for a certain thing, you immediately took measures to gratify that desire without informing me."

"'Drag details'? 'the desire of a certain great lady for a certain thing'? 'gratify that desire'! Countess, truly you are an enigma, a sphinx. Ah! I had seen the head and neck of a woman, but I had not yet seen the lion's claws. It appears that you are about to show them to me. Well, be it so."

"No; I will show you nothing at all, Monseigneur, since you have no longer the desire to see anything. I will give you simply and plainly the answer to the enigma: the 'details' are all that happened at Versailles; the 'desire of a certain lady,' that is the queen; and the 'gratification of this desire' of the queen is the purchase which you made yesterday from Messieurs Boehmer and Bossange of their famous necklace."

"Countess!" murmured the cardinal, pale and trembling.

"Come," she said, "why do you look at me with such an air of fear? Did you not yesterday make a bargain with the jewellers on the Quai de l'École?"

A Rohan does not lie, even to a woman. The cardinal was silent. And as he was about to blush, — a thing for which a man never forgives the woman who causes it, — Jeanne hastened to take his hand.

"Pardon, my Prince," she said; "I was anxious to show you how far you had been mistaken with regard to me. You have thought me foolish and wicked?"

"Oh! oh, Countess!"

"In short —"

"Not a word more; let me speak in my turn. I can persuade you perhaps, for now I see clearly with whom I have to deal. I expected to find in you a pretty woman, a woman of intelligence, a charming mistress; but you are better than all that. Listen."

Jeanne drew nearer to the cardinal, leaving her hand in his.

"You, indeed, were willing to be my mistress, my friend.

without loving me. You told me so yourself," continued Monsieur de Rohan.

"And I repeat it," said Madame de La Motte.

"You had an object, then?"

"Assuredly."

"The object, Countess?"

"Do you need to have me explain it to you?"

"No, I can guess it. You wish to make my fortune. Is it not certain that my fortune once made, my first care would be to secure yours? Am I mistaken?"

"You are not mistaken, Monseigneur; only, believe me, I have not pursued this object in the midst of antipathies and repugnance, — the road has been agreeable."

"You are an amiable woman, Countess, and it is a pleasure even to talk business with you. I was saying, then, that you had guessed aright. You know that I have in a certain direction a respectful attachment?"

"I saw it at the Opera-ball, Prince."

"That attachment will probably never be reciprocated. Oh, may God keep me from the certainty!"

"Eh!" said the countess, "a woman is not always queen, and you surely are the equal of Monsieur le Cardinal Mazarin."

"He was a very handsome man also," said Monsieur de Rohan, laughing.

"And an excellent prime minister," rejoined Jeanne, with the greatest coolness.

"Countess, in your presence it is needless to think; speaking is much more superfluous. You think and speak for your friends. Yes, I mean to be prime minister. Everything prompts me to it; birth, experience in affairs, a certain consideration which foreign courts manifest toward me, the great sympathy felt for me by the French people —"

"Everything, in short, with one exception."

"Except a repugnance, you mean?"

"Yes, on the part of the queen; and this repugnance is a real obstacle. What the queen likes, the king will also like in the end; what she hates, he detests in advance."

"And she hates me?"

"Oh!"

"Let us be frank. I think we must not stop half-way on this pleasant road."

"Well, Monseigneur, the queen does not like you."

"Then, I am lost! No necklace will help me."

"There is where you may be mistaken, Prince."

"The necklace is bought."

"At least, the queen will see that if she does not love you, you love her."

"Oh, Countess!"

"You know, Monseigneur, that we have agreed to call things by their right names."

"So be it. You say, then, that you do not despair of seeing me, some day, prime minister?"

"I am sure of it."

"I should be vexed with myself if I failed to ask what are your ambitions."

"I will tell you, Prince, when you shall be in a position to gratify them."

"That is to the point. I will wait until that day."

"Thank you; now let us take supper."

The cardinal took Jeanne's hand and pressed it as Jeanne had so much desired to have it pressed some days before. But that time had gone by. She drew away her hand.

"Well, Countess?"

"Let us take supper, I say, Monseigneur."

"But I am no longer hungry."

"Then let us talk."

"But I have nothing more to say."

"Then let us separate."

"Is that what you call our alliance? You dismiss me?"

"In order to belong more truly to one another, Monseigneur," she said, "it is necessary above all that we should belong to ourselves."

"You are right, Countess; pardon me for being again mistaken with regard to you. Oh, I swear that it is for the last time." He took her hand and kissed it so respectfully that he did not see the mocking, diabolical smile of the countess, at the words, "This will be the last time that I shall be mistaken with regard to you."

Jeanne rose, conducted the prince as far as the antechamber. There he stopped and whispered, "What comes next, Countess?"

"It is very plain."

"What shall I do?"

"Nothing. Wait for me.

"And you will go —"

"To Versailles."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"When shall I hear from you?"

"Immediately."

"Well then, my patroness, I leave everything to you."

"Leave all to me," and she retired to her own apartment, went to bed, and looking vaguely at the beautiful marble Endymion waiting for Diana, "Decidedly, liberty is best, after all," she murmured.

CHAPTER VIII.

JEANNE MANAGES THE QUEEN.

MISTRESS of such a secret, rich in such a future, supported by so powerful friends, Jeanne felt strong enough to move the world.

To appear at court, no longer as a suppliant, no longer as the poor mendicant protected by Madame de Boulainvilliers, but as a descendant of the Valois, with an income of one hundred thousand francs, with a husband who would be a duke; to be called the favorite of the queen, and in this age of intrigue and agitation to govern the State by governing the king through Marie Antoinette, — this was the panorama which unrolled itself before the inexhaustible imagination of the Comtesse de La Motte.

Early in the day she hastened to Versailles. She had no audience appointed; but her faith in her good fortune had become so strong that she did not doubt that etiquette would yield to her desires. And she was right. All the officials of the court, so eager to discover the tastes of the sovereign, had already noticed how much pleasure Marie Antoinette seemed to take in the society of the pretty countess.

Therefore on her arrival, an intelligent usher placed himself in the way of the queen as she was returning from chapel, and said, as if by chance, to one of the gentlemen in waiting, "Monsieur, what can be done for Madame la Comtesse de La Motte-Valois, who has no letter of audience?"

The queen was talking with Madame de Lamballe. On hearing Jeanne's name adroitly spoken by this man, she stopped and turned round.

"Did not some one say that Madame de La Motte-Valois is here?"

"I believe so, your Majesty," replied the man.

"Who says so?"

"This usher, Madame." The usher bowed modestly.

"I will receive Madame de La Motte-Valois," said the queen, as she passed on. Then, as she reached her apartments, "You may conduct her to the bath-chamber," she said.

Jeanne, to whom the man related plainly what he had done, immediately took out her purse, but the usher stopped her by a smile.

"Madame la Comtesse, please let this debt accumulate; you will be able to pay me with better interest."

Jeanne returned the money to her pocket. "You are right, my friend; I thank you. Why," she said to herself, "should I not patronize an usher who has patronized me? I do as much for a cardinal."

Jeanne soon found herself in the presence of her sovereign. Marie Antoinette was grave and rather reserved, — perhaps for the very reason that she had granted the countess this unexpected reception.

"The queen imagines," thought the friend of Monsieur de Rohan, "that I have come again to beg. Before I have spoken twenty words she will have unbent, or will have driven me from her presence."

"Madame," said the queen, "I have not yet had an opportunity to speak to the king."

"Ah, Madame, your Majesty has already been but too good to me, and I expect nothing more. I have come —"

"Why do you come?" said the queen, quick to see

any change of manner. "You had not asked for an audience. There is something urgent, perhaps, — for yourself?"

"Something urgent, — yes, Madame; but not for myself."

"For me, then? Come, speak on, Countess!" and the queen led Jeanne into the bath-room, where her women were waiting.

The countess, seeing so many persons about the queen, did not begin the conversation. The queen sent away her women.

"Madame," said Jeanne, "your Majesty sees that I am very much embarrassed."

"Why so? I told you to speak."

"Your Majesty knows — I believe I have told you — the very great kindness which Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan has shown me?"

The queen frowned. "I do not remember," she said.

"I thought — "

"No matter; go on."

"Well, Madame, his Eminence has done me the honor to pay me a visit."

"Ah!"

"It was with regard to a very good work I have in charge."

"Very well, Countess, very well. I will contribute also — to your good work."

"Your Majesty misunderstands. I have had the honor of saying that I asked nothing. Monsieur le Cardinal, as usual, spoke to me of the kindness of the queen, of her unlimited generosity."

"And asked that I should patronize his protégés?"

"At first he did, your Majesty."

"I will do it, not for Monsieur le Cardinal, but for the

unfortunate, whom I always help. Only, tell his Eminence that I am very much straitened."

"Alas, Madame, that is just what I told him! and hence the embarrassment I mentioned just now to your Majesty."

"Ah! ah!"

"I expressed to Monsieur le Cardinal my sense of the generosity which constantly empties your purse, always too narrow for your desires."

"Well?"

"See, Monseigneur," I said, "her Majesty renders herself the slave of her own kindness. She sacrifices herself for the poor. The good which she does brings evil to herself; and therefore I accused myself."

"How so, Countess?" said the queen, who was listening attentively, either because Jeanne had attacked her at her weak point, or because the superior intelligence of Marie Antoinette perceived that this long preamble must be the introduction of something very interesting to herself.

"I told him that your Majesty had given me a large sum of money a few days before; that a thousand times, at least, during two years such instances of your generosity had occurred. I told him that if the queen had been less sensible, less generous, she would have two millions in her coffers, and there would have been no need of denying herself that beautiful diamond necklace, — so nobly, so courageously, but allow me to say, Madame, so wrongly refused."

The queen blushed and looked steadily at Jeanne. Evidently the conclusion had been reached in the last sentence. Was there any snare, or was it all flattery? Certainly, this point unsettled, there could not fail to be some danger for a queen. But Jeanne's face expressed so

much sweetness, such candid benevolence and truth, that no one could have accused her of perfidy or adulation. And as the queen herself possessed a soul full of true generosity, and as in generosity there is always strength, and in strength always truth, Marie Antoinette said, with a sigh, "Yes, the necklace is beautiful,—it was beautiful, I mean,—and I am very glad that a woman of taste praises me for having refused it."

"If you knew, Madame," cried Jeanne, "how we come at last to understand the feelings of those who love persons in whom we are interested!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Madame, that on hearing of your heroic sacrifice of the necklace, I saw Monsieur de Rohan turn pale."

"Turn pale!"

"In an instant his eyes were filled with tears. I do not know, Madame, whether it is true that Monsieur de Rohan is a handsome man and an accomplished nobleman, as many pretend him to be; all that I know is that his features, at that moment illumined by the fire of his soul, and furrowed by tears excited by your generous disinterestedness —what am I saying? by your sublime self-denial— will live forever in my memory."

The queen stopped a moment to start a flow of water from the mouth of a gilded swan suspended over the marble bath. "Well, Countess," she said, "since Monsieur de Rohan has appeared to you as handsome and accomplished as you have just said, I advise you not to let him see it. He is a worldly prelate,—a shepherd who gathers the sheep as much for himself as for the Lord."

"Oh, Madame!"

"Well, do I calumniate him? Is it not his reputation? Does he not glory in it? Have you not seen him, on cere-

monial days, moving his beautiful hands in the air, — they are beautiful, it is true, — in order to make them whiter, while on those hands, sparkling with the pastoral ring, the devotees fasten their eyes, more brilliant than the diamond of the cardinal?"

Jeanne bowed.

"The cardinal's trophies," pursued the queen, passionately, "are numerous. Some of them have made scandal. The cardinal is a lover like those of the Fronde. Let those praise him who will; I decline to do so."

"Well, Madame," said Jeanne, completely set at ease by this familiarity, "I do not know whether Monsieur le Cardinal was thinking of those devotees when he spoke so fervently of your Majesty's virtues; but I do know this, that his beautiful hands were pressed to his heart."

The queen shook her head, with a forced laugh.

"Indeed!" thought Jeanne, "are things going even better than we could have thought possible? Is spite about to become our auxiliary? Oh, in that case we shall have too many facilities."

The queen quickly resumed her dignified and indifferent demeanor. "Go on," she said.

"Your Majesty freezes me; this modesty, which repels even the homage —"

"Of the cardinal! Oh, yes!"

"But why, Madame?"

"Because I do not believe in his homage, Countess."

"It ill becomes me," replied Jeanne, with the most profound respect, "to defend any one who has incurred your Majesty's displeasure; it is not to be doubted for a moment that he is guilty, since he has displeased the queen."

"Monsieur de Rohan has not displeased me; he has offended me. But I am a queen and a Christian; doubly

disposed, therefore, to forget offences," and the queen said this with the majestic kindliness which was peculiar to her.

Jeanne was silent.

"Have you nothing more to say?"

"Your Majesty would suspect me. I should incur your anger, your blame, by expressing an opinion which differed from yours."

"You do not agree with me in my opinion of the cardinal!"

"Not at all, Madame."

"You would not speak so if you knew what Prince Louis had done against me."

"I only know what I have seen him do in your Majesty's service."

"He has made polite speeches?"

Jeanne bowed.

"Courtesies, good wishes, compliments?" continued the queen.

Jeanne was silent.

"You have a lively friendship for Monsieur de Rohan, Countess; I will not attack him in your presence," and the queen began to laugh.

"Madame," replied Jeanne, "I prefer your anger to your raillery. The sentiment Monsieur de Rohan entertains for your Majesty is so respectful that I am sure it would kill him to see the queen laughing at him."

"Oh, oh, he has changed very much, then!"

"But your Majesty did me the honor to tell me, only the other day, that for the past ten years Monsieur de Rohan has been passionately —"

"I was jesting, Countess," said the queen, severely.

Jeanne, reduced to silence, appeared to the queen to have given up the contest; but Marie Antoinette was mis-

taken. With those women who combine the nature of the tiger and serpent, the moment when they coil themselves is always the moment when they plan a fresh attack; a concentrated repose precedes the spring.

"You speak of those diamonds," said the queen, imprudently. "Confess that you have thought of them."

"Day and night, Madame," said Jeanne, with the joy of a general who on the field of battle sees a decisive false move on the part of his enemy. "They are so beautiful! they will become your Majesty so well!"

"They will become me?"

"Yes, Madame, yes; they will become your Majesty."

"But they are sold."

"Yes, they are sold."

"To the ambassador of Portugal?"

Jeanne shook her head gently.

"No?" said the queen, joyfully.

"No, Madame."

"To whom, then?"

"Monsieur de Rohan has bought them."

The queen sprang up, and then suddenly resuming her cool manner, "Ah!" she said.

"See, Madame," said Jeanne, with an eloquence full of fervor and passion; "Monsieur de Rohan's conduct in this instance has been superb. It was a generous impulse, a noble action; a soul like your Majesty's cannot help sympathizing with all that is good and full of feeling. When Monsieur de Rohan learned — and I acknowledge having informed him of it — of your Majesty's temporary embarrassment, 'What!' he cried, 'the queen of France denies herself what the wife of a farmer-general would not think of denying herself? What! the queen liable to see some day Madame Necker adorned with these diamonds?' Monsieur de Rohan did not know, until I informed him of it, that

the ambassador of Portugal intended to buy them; then his indignation redoubled. 'It is no longer,' he said, 'a question of gratifying the queen; it is a question of royal dignity. I know the spirit which pervades foreign courts, — vanity, ostentation. They will laugh at the queen of France who has no money to gratify a legitimate desire; and shall I allow the queen of France to be laughed at? No, never!' And he left me abruptly. One hour later I knew that he had bought the diamonds."

"Fifteen hundred thousand francs?"

"Sixteen hundred thousand francs."

"And what was his intention in purchasing them?"

"That, since your Majesty could not have them, they should not at least belong to any other woman."

"And are you sure that Monsieur de Rohan did not buy this necklace as a present for some mistress?"

"I am sure that it is for the purpose of destroying it, rather than that it should adorn any neck but that of the queen."

Marie Antoinette reflected, and her noble countenance expressed clearly everything that was passing in her soul. "Monsieur de Rohan has done well," she said; "it was a noble action and a delicate expression of devotion."

Jeanne eagerly drank in these words. "Therefore, you will thank Monsieur de Rohan?" continued the queen.

"Oh, yes, Madame!"

"You will add that he has proved to me his friendship, and that I, as an honest man — as Catherine said — accept everything from friendship, on condition that I may return it. Therefore I accept, not the gift of Monsieur de Rohan —"

"What then?"

"But a loan from him. Monsieur de Rohan has been pleased to advance his money, or his credit, for my grati-

fication; I will reimburse him. Boehmer wanted ready money, I believe?"

"Yes, Madame."

"How much, — two hundred thousand francs?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"That is just the amount of the quarterly allowance given me by the king. It has been sent to me this morning, — in advance, to be sure; but, in short, I have it." Then, returning with Jeanne to her chamber, she said to the countess, "Open this drawer, if you please."

"The first one?"

"No, the second one. Do you see a pocket-book?"

"Here it is, Madame."

"It contains two hundred and fifty thousand francs. Count them."

Jeanne obeyed.

"Take them to the cardinal and thank him. Tell him that every month I will arrange to pay him thus. The interest can be arranged later. In this way I shall have the necklace which pleased me so much; and if it embarrasses me to pay it, I shall not at least inconvenience the king." She reflected a moment. "And I shall have gained the knowledge that I have a friend who has served me in a delicate manner — " She paused again. "And a friend who has divined my wishes," she said, offering Jeanne her hand, which the countess eagerly seized. Then, as she was about to leave the room, after another pause, "Countess," she said, in a low tone as if alarmed at what she was about to say, "you may tell Monsieur de Rohan that he will be welcome to Versailles, and that I wish to thank him."

Jeanne rushed out of the room, mad with joy and satisfied pride. She clutched the bank-notes as a vulture clutches its stolen prey.

CHAPTER IX.

THE QUEEN'S POCKET-BOOK.

If ever horses driven to gain a prize flew along the race-course, so flew the poor horses which carried Jeanne de Valois away from Versailles. The coachman, stimulated by the countess, drove them as if they were horses running in the Olympic games, who were to gain for their master two talents of gold, and for themselves a triple ration of hulled barley.

The cardinal was at home when Madame de La Motte came to his hôtel openly and before all the servants. She caused herself to be announced more ceremoniously than when she had gone to see the queen.

"Have you just come from Versailles?" he said.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

He regarded her attentively; she was impenetrable. She saw his agitation, his sadness and distress; but she had no pity.

"Well?" he said.

"Well, tell me, Monseigneur, what do you desire? Speak a little, so that I may not reproach myself too much."

"Ah, Countess, you say that with an air —"

"Sad, is it not?"

"Killing."

"You wished me to see the queen?"

"Yes."

"I have seen her. You hoped that she would allow me to speak of you, — she who several times had evinced her aversion to you, and her displeasure on hearing your name?"

"I see that if I had formed any such desire, I cannot expect to see it fulfilled."

"On the contrary, the queen spoke to me of you."

"Or rather, you have been so good as to speak of me to her?"

"It is true."

"And her Majesty listened?"

"That requires an explanation."

"Do not say another word, Countess. I see how great a repugnance her Majesty has had — "

"No, not very great — I ventured to speak of the necklace."

"You dared to say that I thought — "

"Of buying it for her, yes."

"Oh, Countess, that was sublime! and she listened?"

"Why, yes."

"You told her that I offered those diamonds to her?"

"She refused decidedly."

"I am lost!"

"Refused to accept a gift, yes; but the loan — "

"The loan! And you turned my offer so delicately?"

"So delicately that she accepted."

"I lend to the queen! Countess, is it possible?"

"It is much more than giving, is it not?"

"A thousand times."

"I thought so. All the same, her Majesty accepts."

The cardinal rose, then sat down again. Then coming over to Jeanne and taking her hands, "Do not deceive me," he said; "consider that with one word you can make me the most miserable of men."

"One does not play with passions, Monseigneur, unless they are ridiculous; but men of your rank and merit cannot be ridiculous."

"It is true. Then what you have said —"

"Is the exact truth."

"I have, then, a secret with the queen?"

"A secret — a momentous secret."

The cardinal ran to Jeanne and tenderly pressed her hand.

"I like that clasp of the hand," said the countess; "it is like that of a man to a man."

"It is that of a happy man to a protecting angel."

"Monseigneur, do not exaggerate."

"Oh, but I mean it. My joy, my gratitude — never —"

"But you are exaggerating both the one and the other. To lend a million and a half to the queen — was that all that you desired?"

The cardinal sighed.

"Buckingham would have asked more from Anne of Austria after strewing his pearls on the floor of the royal chamber."

"What Buckingham obtained, Countess, I am unwilling to wish for, even in a dream."

"You can come to an understanding as to that, Monseigneur, with the queen herself; for she desired me to inform you that she will receive you with pleasure at Versailles."

The imprudent woman had no sooner allowed these words to escape her lips than the cardinal turned pale, like a young man receiving the first kiss of love. He felt around him like a man intoxicated, and took hold of the nearest chair to support himself.

"Ah! ah!" thought Jeanne, "it is even more serious than I imagined. I was thinking of a duchy, a peerage,

an income of a hundred thousand francs; but I may now go in for a principality, and an income of half a million, for Monsieur de Rohan is not actuated by ambition nor by avarice, but by love!"

Monsieur de Rohan quickly recovered himself. Joy is not a malady of long duration; and as he was a man of steady purposes, he deemed it advisable to talk business with Jeanne that he might the more quickly forget that he had spoken of love; and Jeanne allowed him to do so.

"My friend," said the cardinal, pressing Jeanne in his arms, "what does the queen propose to do in regard to that loan which you suggested to her?"

"You ask that on the supposition that the queen has no money?"

"Precisely."

"Well, the queen proposes to pay you as she would pay Boehmer, with this difference: if she had bought of Boehmer all Paris would have known it, — a thing not to be thought of after her famous saying about the man-of-war. The queen therefore wishes to receive the diamonds by installments, and make payment for them in the same manner. You will afford her the opportunity; you are to her a discreet cashier, and solvent in case she should meet with any obstacle in making the payments, — that is all. She is happy, and she pays; do not ask for more."

"She pays? What do you mean?"

"The queen — a woman who knows everything — knows very well that you have debts, Monseigneur. And then she is proud; she is not a friend who will receive presents. When I told her that you had advanced two hundred and fifty thousand francs —"

"You told her that?"

"Why not?"

"It would make the affair impossible at once."

"It afforded her a reason for accepting your service. 'Nothing for nothing' is the queen's motto."

"*Mon Dieu!*"

Jeanne quietly felt in her pocket and took out the queen's pocket-book.

"What is that?" asked Monsieur de Rohan.

"A pocket-book containing bank-notes to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand francs. The queen sends them to you with hearty thanks."

"Oh!"

"The full amount is there; I counted the notes."

"There is no question about that."

"What are you looking at so intently?"

"I am looking at this pocket-book, which I do not recognize as yours."

"It seems to please you, and yet it is neither rich nor handsome."

"It does please me, and I do not know why."

"You have good taste."

"Now you are making fun of me. In what way have I shown good taste?"

"Certainly, since your taste agrees with the queen's."

"This pocket-book —"

"Was the queen's, Monseigneur."

"Do you wish very much to keep it?"

"Oh, very much!"

Monsieur de Rohan sighed. "That is easily conceived," he said.

"Nevertheless, if it would please you," said the countess, with a smile which might have brought a saint to ruin.

"You cannot doubt it, Countess; but I would not deprive you of it."

"Take it."

"Countess!" cried the cardinal, transported with delight, "you are a friend the most precious, the most intelligent, the most —"

"Yes, yes."

"And between us it is —"

"'For life, for death,' — they always say that. No, I have only one merit."

"What is it, then?"

"That of having pushed your affairs with considerable success and with very much zeal."

"If that were your only merit, my friend, I might say that I am almost equal to you, inasmuch as I, while you, poor dear, went to Versailles, — I also was working for you."

Jeanne looked at the cardinal with surprise.

"Yes," he resumed, "a mere trifle. My banker came to propose my taking stock in some enterprise for draining and cultivating a marsh somewhere. He assured me the profit was sure, and I agreed."

"And you did well."

"Oh, you will see in a moment that you always occupy the first place in my thoughts."

"The second, you mean; and that is more than I deserve. But go on."

"My banker gave me two hundred shares, and I took a quarter of them for you."

"Oh, Monseigneur!"

"Let me finish. Two hours later he came again. The sole fact of my subscription for those shares had raised the value of the stock a hundred per cent. He handed me a hundred thousand francs."

"A fine speculation."

"Of which here is your share, dear Countess, — I should

say, dear friend," and from the package of two hundred and fifty thousand francs given by the queen he slipped twenty-five thousand francs into Jeanne's hands.

"That is very good of you, Monseigneur,—gift for gift. But what pleases me most is that you thought of me."

"I shall always do so," replied the cardinal, kissing her hand.

"And you may count on the same from me. *Au revoir*, Monseigneur, soon — at Versailles," and Jeanne took her departure, after giving the cardinal a memorandum of the payments appointed by the queen, the first of which would be five hundred thousand francs in one month from date.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH WE AGAIN MEET DOCTOR LOUIS.

Perhaps our readers, remembering in what a difficult position we left Monsieur de Charny, will be grateful to us for leading them back to that antechamber in Versailles to which the brave sailor, never intimidated by men or elements, had fled in fear of fainting in the presence of three women, — the queen, Andrée, and Madame de La Motte.

When he reached the middle of the antechamber, Monsieur de Charny perceived that he could go no farther. He staggered and held out his arms. It was noticed that his strength had given way, and several persons ran to his relief. The young officer fainted. After some moments he came to himself, and had no suspicion that the queen had seen him, and perhaps, under the first impulse of her anxiety, would have hastened to him, had not Andrée, incited by jealousy rather than by regard for propriety, checked her movement.

It was fortunate, however, that the queen, warned by Andrée, had remained in her chamber; for hardly had the door closed when she heard an usher announcing, "The king!"

As the king passed through the antechamber, attended by several officers of his household, he paused on seeing a man lying on a bench in the recess of a window, and in a condition that seemed to alarm the two guards

who were attending to him, who were not accustomed to see officers faint away without reason. So, while supporting Monsieur de Charny, they called out to him: "Monsieur! Monsieur! what, then, is the matter?"

But Monsieur de Charny had no voice and could not reply. The king, understanding from that silence the gravity of the case, moved quickly toward the sufferer. "Why, yes," said he, "yes, it is some one who has lost consciousness."

On hearing the king's voice the two guards turned around, and by a mechanical movement relaxed their hold on Monsieur de Charny, who fell, or rather, sustaining himself with the remains of his strength, slid groaning to the floor.

"Oh! gentlemen," said the king, "what are you doing?"

They hastened to raise Monsieur de Charny, who had again fainted away, and gently placed him in an easy-chair.

"Oh!" cried the king, suddenly, on recognizing the young officer; "why, it is Monsieur de Charny!"

"Monsieur de Charny?" cried the attendants.

"Yes, Monsieur de Suffren's nephew."

These words had a magical effect. Charny was immediately inundated with perfumed waters, as if he were in the midst of women. A doctor arrived and hastily examined the patient. The king, curious in everything pertaining to science, and compassionate toward all suffering, remained through the examination.

The doctor's first care was to open the young man's vest and shirt, to give the air access to his chest; but in doing this he made an unexpected discovery.

"A wound!" said the king, becoming more interested, and coming nearer that he might see more clearly.

"Yes, yes," murmured Monsieur de Charny, trying to

raise himself, and looking weakly around; "an old wound which has reopened; it is nothing," and his hand slightly pressed the doctor's fingers.

A physician understands, and ought to understand, everything. This was not a physician of the court, but a surgeon from the city of Versailles. He wished to give himself importance. "Oh!" said he, "an old wound; it pleases you to say so, Monsieur, but its edges are too fresh, the blood is too red, — that wound is not twenty-four hours old."

Charny, to whom that contradiction brought a supply of strength, stood up and said: "I cannot suppose, Monsieur, that you intend to inform me at what time I received my wound. I have told you, and I tell you again, that it is an old wound."

At that moment Charny perceived and recognized the king. "The king!" he said, and immediately buttoned his vest as if ashamed that his weakness had been exposed to a spectator so illustrious.

"Yes, Monsieur de Charny," replied the king; "and I am very glad that I came this way, and may perhaps bring you some relief."

"A scratch, Sire," stammered Charny, — "an old wound, Sire, that is all."

"Old or new," said Louis XVI., "the wound has enabled me to see your blood, — the precious blood of a brave gentleman."

"Whom two hours on his bed will restore to health," added Charny, and he tried to rise again. But he had over-estimated his strength. He became dizzy, tottered on his legs, and fell back again into the armchair.

"Really," said the king, "he is very ill."

"Oh, yes," said the doctor, with a shrewd and diplomatic manner; "but we may save him yet."

The king was a man of honor; he had conjectured that Charny was concealing something. That secret was sacred to him. Many another man would have sought to elicit it from the doctor, who seemed not unwilling to disclose it; but Louis XVI. preferred to leave the secret with its owner. "I do not wish," he said, "that Monsieur de Charny should expose himself to danger by returning home. Let him be cared for here. Send immediately for his uncle, Monsieur de Suffren, and when this gentleman," designating the officious practitioner, "shall have been thanked for his services, let my own physician, Doctor Louis, be summoned."

An officer hastened to execute the king's orders. Two others raised Charny and carried him to the end of the gallery to the chamber of the commander of the guards. Monsieur de Suffren was sent for, and Doctor Louis arrived to take charge of the patient.

We are already acquainted with this man, honest, wise, and modest, of an intelligence less brilliant than useful, — a brave laborer in that immense field of science in which, if he who gathers the harvest is more honored, he who opens the furrow is not less honorable.

Behind the doctor, bending over his patient, was Monsieur de Suffren, who, summoned by a messenger, had hastened thither. The illustrious sailor could not understand that sudden illness. When he had taken Charny's hand and looked at his dull eyes, "Strange!" he said, "it is very strange. Doctor, my nephew has never been ill before."

"That proves nothing, Monsieur," replied the doctor.

"The air of Versailles must be very oppressive; for, I repeat, I have seen Olivier at sea for the last ten years, and always vigorous, always erect as a mast."

"It is his wound," said one of the officers.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the admiral. "Olivier was never wounded in his life."

"Oh, I beg pardon," said the officer, pointing to the crimsoned cambric, "but I thought —"

Monsieur de Suffren saw the blood.

"Enough, enough!" said the doctor, abruptly, after feeling his patient's pulse. "Are we to discuss the origin of the malady? We have the malady itself; let us be content with it, and cure it if we can."

The admiral was pleased with this decided style of speech; it was like that used by surgeons on his vessels. "Is it very dangerous, Doctor?" he asked, with more emotion than he wished to show.

"About as dangerous as a cut of a razor on the chin."

"Good! Thank the king, gentlemen. Olivier, I shall come back to see you."

Olivier moved his eyes and his fingers, as if at the same time to express his thanks to his uncle who was going away, and to the doctor who had persuaded him to go. Then, happy because he was in bed, and in the care of a man full of intelligence and kindness, he pretended to fall asleep. The doctor sent every one away.

Olivier soon slept in fact, not without having given thanks to Heaven for what had happened to him, or rather that no misfortune had happened to him under circumstances so grave. Then he became feverish. He went through again and again, in feverish dreams, the scene with Philippe, the scene with the queen, and the scene with the king, and then fell into that terrible circle which the raging blood throws like a net around the mind. He became delirious. Three hours later they could hear him in the gallery where the guards were on duty. The doctor noticed this, and calling his servant, ordered him to take Olivier in his arms. Olivier uttered plaintive cries.

"Roll the counterpane round his head," said the doctor.

"And what shall I do with him?" asked the servant. "He is too heavy, and he resists. I must have one of the guards to help me."

"You are a poor chicken-heart if you are afraid of a sick man," said the doctor.

"Monsieur —"

"And if you find him too heavy you are not so strong as you thought. I shall have to send you back to Auvergne."

The threat produced its effect. Charny, crying out, howling, and gesticulating, was carried off like a feather by the Auvergnese, in full view of the guards. The latter clustered about the doctor questioning him.

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, shouting to drown Charny's cries, "you can understand that I am not going to walk a league every hour to visit this patient whom the king has confided to me. Your gallery is at the end of the world."

"Where are you taking him, then, Doctor?"

"To my own quarters. I have two rooms here, you know. I shall sleep in one of them, and by day after to-morrow, if no one meddles with him, I will give you a good account of him."

"But, Doctor," said the officer in command, "I assure you that the patient would be well lodged here; we all love Monsieur de Suffren, and —"

"Yes, yes; I know all about this care of comrades for one another. The wounded man is thirsty; they are kind to him, give him drink, and he dies. To the devil with such care as that! it has killed patients enough for me."

Before the doctor had finished speaking, Olivier's cries could no longer be heard.

"Indeed," pursued the worthy doctor, "that was very

well thought of! There is only one danger now, — the king will want to see the sick man. And if he sees him, he will hear him. The devil! there is no time to lose. I must speak to the queen; she will give me advice."

The good doctor, having formed this resolution with the promptitude of a man who counts the seconds, deluged the face of the wounded man with cold water, placed him in bed in such a position that he would not hurt himself by turning over or falling. He put a padlock on the window-shutter, double-locked the door of the room, and putting the key in his pocket repaired to the queen, after having assured himself, by listening outside, that Olivier's cries could not be understood, even should they be heard.

It need hardly be said that as a precaution the Auvergnese had been shut up in the room with the sick man.

Near the door the doctor met Madame de Misery, whom the queen had sent to obtain news of the wounded man. She insisted on entering.

"Come along, Madame," he said, "I am just going out."

"But, Doctor, the queen is waiting!"

"I am on my way to the queen, Madame."

"The queen desires —"

"The queen shall know as much as she desires to know, I promise you, Madame. Let us go;" and he did go, so quickly that he forced the first lady in waiting of Marie Antoinette to run in order to keep up with him.

CHAPTER XI.

ÆGRI SOMNIA.

THE queen was awaiting the return of Madame de Misery; she was not expecting the doctor. The latter entered with his accustomed familiarity.

"Madame," he said aloud, "the patient, in whom the king and your Majesty are interested, is doing as well as can be expected in a case of fever."

The queen knew the doctor; she was well aware of his aversion to those persons who, he said, "uttered whole cries for only half sufferings." She had an idea that Monsieur de Charny was exaggerating his condition. Brave women are inclined to underrate the courage of brave men.

"Is the wound a slight one?" she asked.

"Eh! eh!" said the doctor.

"A scratch —"

"Why, no, no, Madame; but whether scratch or wound, all I know is that he has fever."

"Poor fellow! A very violent fever?"

"A terrible fever."

"What!" said the queen, in terror; "I did not think that so suddenly — fever —"

The doctor looked at the queen for a moment. "There are fevers and fevers," he replied.

"My dear Louis, really you frighten me, — you, who are usually so reassuring. I do not know what can have come over you this evening."

"Nothing extraordinary."

"Ah! for instance, you keep turning round; you look from right to left; you appear as if you wanted to confide to me a great secret."

"Eh! perhaps I do."

"I thought so, — a secret about the fever?"

"Why, yes."

"About Monsieur de Charny's fever?"

"Why, yes."

"And you came to tell me this secret?"

"Why, yes."

"Be quick, then. You know how curious I am. Come, let us begin at the beginning."

"Like little Jean?"

"Yes, my dear Doctor."

"Well, Madame?"

"Well, I am waiting, Doctor."

"No; it is I who am waiting."

"What do you mean?"

"For you to question me, Madame. I cannot tell a story very well; but if you ask me questions, I can answer like a book."

"Well, I asked you to tell me how Monsieur de Charny's fever is getting on."

"No; you begin wrong. In the first place, ask me how it happens that Monsieur de Charny is in my apartment, in one of my two little rooms, instead of being in the gallery, or in the guard-room?"

"Well, then, I do ask. Indeed, it is astonishing."

"Well, Madame, I did not leave Monsieur de Charny in this gallery, or in this guard-room, because Monsieur de Charny is not suffering from an ordinary fever."

The queen made a gesture of surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Monsieur de Charny, when he has a fever, is immediately delirious."

"Oh!" said the queen, clasping her hands.

"And," continued Louis, approaching the queen, "when he is delirious — the poor young man! — he says a great many things it would be improper for the gentlemen of the guard, or any other person, to hear."

"Doctor!"

"Ah, Madame, you should not have questioned me if you did not wish me to answer."

"Say on, dear Doctor;" and the queen took his hand. "This young man is an atheist, perhaps, and blasphemes in his delirium."

"Not at all! On the contrary, he is a devotee."

"Perhaps there is something of exaltation in his ravings?"

"Exaltation is the very word."

The queen composed her features, and assuming that superb dignity of manner which always accompanies the actions of princes accustomed to the respect of others and their own self-esteem, — a faculty indispensable to the lords of the earth in retaining self-control, — "Monsieur de Charny," she said, "has been recommended to me. He is the nephew of Monsieur de Suffren, our hero. He has rendered me personal services, and I wish to be to him as a relation, a dear friend. Therefore, tell me the truth; I must and will hear it."

"But I cannot tell you, Madame," replied Louis; "and since your Majesty has such a desire to know about it, I know of no way but for your Majesty to hear it yourself. Then, if this young man should say anything improper, the queen will not be angry at the indiscretion which may have allowed the secret to be divined, nor at the imprudence which might have concealed it."

"I acknowledge your consideration," said the queen; "and since Monsieur de Charny says such strange things in his delirium —"

"Things which your Majesty ought to hear in order to appreciate them," said the good doctor; and he took the trembling hand of the queen.

"But above all, take care," cried the queen; "I can do nothing here without being followed up by some kindly spy."

"I shall be the only one to-night. We have only to go the length of my corridor, which has a door at either end. I will lock that by which we enter, and no one will be near us, Madame."

"I trust to my dear doctor," said the queen, and taking the doctor's arm she glided out of the apartment, palpitating with curiosity.

The doctor kept his promise. Never was king, marching to battle or setting out to make a reconnoissance, — never was queen, seeking an adventure, more carefully attended by a captain of the guards or an officer of the palace.

The doctor locked the first door, and approached the second, against which he placed his ear.

"Well," said the queen, "is your patient in there?"

"No, Madame; he is in the second room. Oh, if he had been in this room you would have heard him at the end of the corridor. Just listen at this door."

She heard, indeed, an inarticulate murmur of moanings. "He is groaning, he is suffering, Doctor."

"Not at all; he does not groan at all. He is speaking distinctly. Stay, I will open this door."

"But I do not wish to go in where he is," cried the queen, drawing back.

"I do not propose that you shall," said the doctor. "I

only wish you to listen in the adjoining room, where, without fear of seeing or being seen, you can hear all that the wounded man says."

"All these mysteries, all these preparations, frighten me," murmured the queen.

"How will it be, then, when you have heard him?" replied the doctor, and he went alone into Charny's room.

Dressed in his regimental small clothes, the buckles of which the good doctor had unfastened, his well-formed legs encased in silk stockings, his arms stretched out like those of a corpse, and rigid in the fine, crumpled cambric sleeves, Charny endeavored now and then to raise from the pillow his head, which was as heavy as lead. A hot perspiration was streaming from his forehead, and locks of his hair clung to his temples. Overwhelmed, crushed, inert, he was no more than a thought, a sentiment, a reflection; his body lived no longer but by the flame of thought, constantly springing up in his brain like that of a wick in its alabaster vase.

It is not an empty comparison we have chosen; for this flame, the sole existence of Charny, illuminated, fantastically and softly, certain details which memory alone, unaided by passion, could have found little food for romance.

Charny was relating to himself his interview in the coach with the German lady he had met on the road from Paris to Versailles.

"German! German!" he was constantly repeating.

"Yes, a German lady, — we all know that," said the doctor; "on the road to Versailles."

"Queen of France," he exclaimed suddenly.

"Eh!" said the doctor, looking into the room where the queen was standing. "Nothing less than that. What do you say to that, Madame?"

"What a dreadful thing it is," murmured Charny, "to

love an angel, a woman, to love her madly, to give one's life for her, and then on approaching her to find nothing more than a queen of velvet and gold, metal and cloth, without a heart!"

"Oh!" said the doctor, with a constrained laugh.

Charny paid no attention to the interruption. "I would love," he said, "a married woman. I would love her with that passion which makes one forget everything else. Well, I will say to that woman: 'There remain to us some happy days on this earth; all those without love which await us in the future will not be equal to these few blessed ones! Come, my well-beloved, so long as you love me and I love you, we shall lead the life of the elect. Afterward, — well, after that will come death, like the life we are living now. Therefore let us enjoy the blessings of love.'"

"Not badly argued for a man in a fever," murmured the doctor, "though the morality of it might be improved."

"But her children!" cried Charny, suddenly, with rage; "she will not leave her two children."

"That is an obstacle, *hic nodus*," said the doctor, with a sublime mingling of raillery and gentleness, as he wiped Charny's brow.

"Oh!" continued the young man, insensible to everything, "the children could be carried off in the skirt of a travelling coat! Come, Charny, if you can carry off in your arms the mother, who is lighter than a linnet's wing, since you can take her up without feeling any burden but a thrill of love, can you not also carry off the children of Marie — Ah —"

He uttered a terrible cry.

"The children of a king would be a burden so heavy that the void they left would be felt through half the world."

The doctor left his patient and approached the queen. He found her standing, cold and trembling; he took her hand, which was shaking.

"You are right," she said. "This is more than delirium; this young man would incur a terrible danger if he were overheard."

"Listen! listen!" said the doctor.

"No, not another word."

"He is becoming more quiet. Hark! he is praying."

Indeed, Charny had raised himself up and joined his hands; he fixed his great, astonished eyes on vacancy.

"Marie," he said, in a gentle and thrilling tone, "Marie, I have felt that you loved me. Oh, I will say nothing about it. Your foot touched mine in the coach, Marie, and I felt like dying. Your hand fell upon mine — there — there — I will say nothing of it; it is the secret of my life. My blood may flow from my wound, Marie, but the secret shall not issue with it. My enemy has steeped his sword in my blood; but if he knows something of my secret, he knows nothing of yours. Therefore, fear nothing, Marie! do not even tell me that you love me; it is useless; since you blushed, I have nothing more to learn."

"Oh, oh!" said the doctor. "It is no longer fever alone; see how calm he is; it is — "

"It is —" said the queen, with anxiety.

"It is an ecstasy, Madame, and ecstasy resembles memory; it is indeed the memory of a soul recalling heaven."

"I have heard enough," murmured the queen, so agitated that she attempted to flee.

The doctor stopped her. "Madame, Madame," he said, "what do you wish me to do?"

"Nothing, Doctor; nothing."

"But if the king should wish to see his protégé?"

"Ah, yes. Oh, that would be a misfortune!"

"What shall I say?"

"Doctor, I have not an idea; I cannot find a word; this frightful spectacle has unnerved me."

"And you have caught the fever of this ecstatic," said the doctor, in a low voice; "your pulse is at a hundred at least."

The queen did not answer; she withdrew her hand and disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

ANDRÉE.

THE doctor remained thoughtful, looking after the queen as she withdrew. Then shaking his head, he murmured to himself: "There are in this palace mysteries which are not within the reach of my science. Against some of them I arm myself with a lancet, and pierce the veins to cure them; against others I arm myself with reproach, and pierce the heart. Shall I cure them?"

Then, when the attack was over, he closed Charny's eyes, which had remained open and haggard, bathed his temples with water and vinegar, and bestowed upon him those attentions which change the burning atmosphere that surrounds the invalid into a paradise of delight. Then, seeing that the features of the patient were becoming calm, that the sobs were giving place to sighs, that some vague syllables escaped from his lips instead of furious words, "Yes, yes, there was not merely sympathy, but some powerful influence," he said; "it seemed as if this delirium started up to meet the visitor who has just retired. Yes; human atoms move, as in the vegetable world moves the fecundating dust. Yes; thought has its secret modes of communication; hearts have their hidden approaches."

Suddenly the doctor started, turned, and listened intently. "Well," he murmured, "who can it be now?" He had heard something like a murmur and the rustling

of a dress at the farther end of the corridor. "It cannot be the queen," he said to himself. "She would not so soon change her course of action. Let us see."

He went quietly and opened another door communicating with the corridor; and putting out his head without noise, he saw within ten feet of him a woman dressed in a long robe, standing motionless like a statue of despair. The feeble light placed in the corridor was insufficient to illumine it from one end to the other; but the figure was visible in the moonlight, which for a moment was unobscured by clouds.

The doctor noiselessly withdrew, and passing rapidly to the door near which the woman stood, he suddenly opened it. She cried out, reached forth her hands, and met those of Doctor Louis.

"Who is there?" asked the doctor, with more of kindness than of menace in his tone; for he had inferred from her immobility that she was listening with her heart rather than with her ears.

"It is I, Doctor, I," replied a voice, sweet and sad.

Although that voice was not unknown to the doctor, it awakened in his mind only a vague and indistinct remembrance.

"It is I, Andrée de Taverney, Doctor."

"Ah! what is the matter? Is she ill, then?"

"*She!*" cried Andrée. "Who, then, is *she?*"

The doctor saw that he had committed an imprudence. "I beg pardon!" he said; "but a little while ago I saw a woman going away. Perhaps it was you?"

"Ah, yes! a woman has been here before me, then?" and Andrée uttered these words with such an accent of curiosity that the doctor could have no doubt as to the sentiment that prompted them.

"My dear child," he replied, "it seems to me that we

are playing at cross-purposes. Of whom are you speaking? What do you wish? Explain yourself."

"Doctor," replied Andrée, in melancholy tones that went to the heart, "do not try to deceive me! You may admit to me that a woman has been here, for I saw her."

"Eh! who said that no one had been here?"

"Yes; but a woman, — a woman, Doctor!"

"Certainly, a woman, — unless you would maintain the theory that a woman is a woman only to the age of forty years."

"Then she who came here was forty years old?" cried Andrée, with a sigh of relief.

"When I say forty years, I do not give her whole age by five or six years; but then we must be polite to our friends, and Madame de Misery is one of mine."

"Madame de Misery?"

"Certainly."

"It is, indeed, she who came here?"

"And why the deuce should n't I tell you if it were any one else?"

"Oh, I was thinking —"

"Indeed, women are all alike, — incomprehensible! I thought I knew you; but no, you are as unintelligible as all the rest. It is enough to make one swear!"

"Good Doctor, dear Doctor —"

"Enough. Let us come to the point."

Andrée looked at him anxiously.

"Is she worse than she was?" he asked.

"Who?"

"The queen, of course."

"The queen?"

"Yes, the queen, at whose order Madame de Misery came to seek me a little while ago. She has one of her suffocating spells, with palpitations, — a sad disease, my

dear young lady, and incurable. Tell me about her, if you are sent by her, and let us return at once."

The doctor made a movement as if to go from that place; but Andrée gently checked him, and replied, "No, dear Doctor, I did not come on behalf of the queen. I did not even know that she was ill. Poor queen! had I known that — Ah, pardon me, Doctor! but I am no longer aware of what I am saying."

"I see that clearly."

"I know neither what I am saying, nor what I am doing."

"Oh, I know what you are doing! You are turning faint."

In fact, Andrée had withdrawn her hand from the doctor's arm, and it fell lifeless by her side; she leaned forward, white and cold. The doctor held her up, and spoke to her encouragingly.

Andrée then made a violent effort to recover herself. That strong soul which had never allowed itself to be prostrated either by pain or by grief, tightened now its springs of steel. "Doctor," she said, "you know that I am nervous, and that the darkness frightens me. I have lost my way in the dark, and that is why I am in such a state."

"And why in the world do you expose yourself to the risk of losing your way in the darkness? No one, you say, has sent you; nothing has brought you."

"I did not say *nothing*, Doctor; I said no one."

"Ah! subtleties, my dear patient. We are not very comfortably placed here for considering them. Let us go elsewhere, especially if they are likely to continue."

"Ten minutes, Doctor, is all that I ask of you."

"Ten minutes, so be it, — but not standing; my legs positively forbid that sort of a dialogue. We will go and sit down."

"Where, then?"

"On the bench in the corridor, if agreeable to you."

"And no one will hear us, you think, Doctor?" said Andrée, in alarm.

"No one."

"Not even the wounded man in there!" she continued in the same tone, pointing to the chamber of the invalid.

"No," said the doctor, "if any one could hear us, that poor fellow certainly could not."

Andrée clasped her hands. "My God! is he, then, so ill?" she asked.

"He certainly is not well. But let us speak of what brings you here. Quick, my child, quick; you know the queen expects me."

"Well, Doctor," said Andrée, sighing, "we are speaking of it, it seems to me."

"What! Monsieur de Charny!"

"It is about him, Doctor, — I came to get news of him."

The silence with which the doctor received these words, which he might have expected, was chilling. He was, in fact, comparing Andrée's demeanor with that of the queen. He saw these two women led by the same sentiment, and he judged by the symptoms that this sentiment was a violent love.

Andrée, who was ignorant of the queen's visit, and who could not look into the doctor's heart, full of kindliness and compassion, understood his silence as implying blame. She defended herself against that condemnation, silent though it was.

"It seems to me, Doctor, that you can pardon the step I have taken, since Monsieur de Charny is suffering from a wound received in a duel, and that wound was given by my brother."

"Your brother!" cried Doctor Louis; "it is Monsieur Philippe de Taverney who has wounded Monsieur de Charny?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, I was not acquainted with that fact."

"But now that you know it you find it natural, do you not, that I should make inquiries?"

"Of course, my child," said the good doctor, delighted to find a reason for indulgence. "I was uninformed, and could not conjecture the true explanation." These last words he emphasized in a way which showed Andrée that he adopted her explanation with some reserve.

"Come now, Doctor," said Andrée, leaning with both hands on his arm, and looking in his face; "come, tell me your whole thought."

"Why, I have done so. Why should I make any mental reservations?"

"A duel between two gentlemen is a common thing, it is an every day affair."

"The only thing which would give importance to this duel would be the fact that our two young men had fought about some woman."

"About a woman, Doctor?"

"Yes; about you, for example."

"About me!" Andrée sighed. "No, Doctor, it was not for me that Monsieur de Charny fought."

The doctor had the air of being satisfied with the answer, but he determined in some way or other to have an explanation of the sigh. "Then," he said, "I understand, — it was your brother who sent to obtain an exact account of the wounded man's condition."

"Yes, it is my brother; yes, Doctor," said Andrée.

The doctor looked her in the face. "Oh! I will soon find out the secret of your heart, inflexible soul," he mur-

mured. Then aloud, "Well, then, I will tell you the whole truth, which should be spoken to every one desirous of knowing it. Report it to your brother, and let him make his arrangements accordingly. You understand?"

"No, Doctor; for I do not know what you mean by these words, 'Let him make his arrangements accordingly.'"

"I mean this: up to the present time the king still condemns the fighting of duels. He no longer insists upon the observance of the edicts, it is true; but when a duel has caused scandal, his Majesty banishes or imprisons."

"That is true, Doctor."

"And when unfortunately a man dies, — oh! then, the king is pitiless. Well, advise your dear brother to keep himself in hiding for a little while."

"Doctor," cried Andrée, — "Doctor, Monsieur de Charny is, then, very ill?"

"Listen, dear young lady! I promised you the truth, and here it is: if by this time to-morrow the fever which has just begun, and which is consuming him, should not have subsided, Monsieur de Charny will be a dead man."

Andrée felt that she was going to shriek. She pressed her hand to her throat; she buried her nails in her flesh that she might allay in physical pain this anguish which was tearing her heart. The doctor could not see upon her features the signs of this inward struggle.

Andrée controlled herself like a woman of Sparta. "My brother," she said, "will not fly. He has fought Monsieur de Charny like a brave man; if he had the misfortune to wound him, it was in self-defence; if he has killed him, God will judge him."

"She did not come on her own account," said the doctor to himself; "therefore, it must be for the queen. Let us see if her Majesty has carried her thoughtlessness to

such an extreme." Then, speaking aloud to Andrée, "What effect has this duel had on the queen?" he asked.

"The queen? I do not know," replied Andrée. "How does it concern the queen?"

"She likes Mónsieur de Taverney, I presume."

"Well, Monsieur de Taverney is safe; let us hope that her Majesty will defend my brother if he is accused."

The doctor, beaten on both sides of his double hypothesis, abandoned the attack. "I am not a physiologist," he said to himself, "I am only a surgeon. Why the devil when I know so much about the play of muscles and nerves, should I trouble myself about the play of womanly caprice and passion?—Mademoiselle, you have learned what you desire to know. Advise Monsieur de Taverney to fly, or not, as you please. My business is to try to save the wounded man—this night; if I do not succeed to-night in saving him, death, which quietly carries on its work, will take him from me within twenty-four hours. Adieu," and he gently, but firmly, closed the door upon her.

Andrée pressed her hand convulsively to her forehead when she found herself alone,—alone with that terrible reality. It seemed to her as if death, of which the doctor had spoken so calmly, had already descended into that chamber, and was stalking through the dark corridor in its white winding-sheet; it seemed as if the breath of this melancholy apparition froze her limbs. She fled to her room, locked the door, and throwing herself on her knees by the side of the bed, "My God!" she cried, with frenzy, while burning tears fell from her eyes,—"my God! thou art not unjust, thou art not unwise, thou art not cruel, my God! Thou who canst do everything, thou wilt not let this young man die, who has done no harm and who is so much loved. My God! we poor human beings be-

lieve in the power of thy kindness, although trembling always before the power of thy wrath. But I! — I who pray to thee — I have been sufficiently tried in this world; I have suffered without having committed crime. Well, I have never complained, even to thee; I have never doubted thee. If now when I pray to thee; if now when I entreat; if now when I ask for the life of a young man, — if now thou shouldst refuse me, O my God! I would say that thou hadst made use of all thy power against me, and that thou art a God of wrath, of insatiable vengeance; I would say — oh, I blaspheme; pardon me, I blaspheme! and thou dost not smite me! Pardon! pardon! thou art indeed the God of clemency and mercy!"

Andrée felt her sight failing, her strength giving way; she fell inanimate upon the floor. When she woke from this cold sleep and remembered everything, her fears and her griefs, "My God!" she murmured, in a bitter tone; "thou hast been unmerciful! I love him! Oh, yes, I love him! that is enough, is it not? Now, wilt thou kill him?"

CHAPTER XIII.

DELIRIUM.

God doubtless listened to Andrée's prayer. Monsieur de Charny did not succumb to his attack of fever. On the next day, while she was anxiously waiting for any intelligence which might be received from the sick man, the latter, thanks to the care of good Doctor Louis, was passing from death to life.

Charny once out of danger, Doctor Louis did not give him so much attention; the subject ceased to be interesting. To the doctor, the living are of very little consequence, especially when they are convalescent or quite well. But at the end of a week, during which Andrée became entirely reassured, the doctor, who remembered the manifestations of his patient during his illness, thought best to remove Charny to a distant place. He wished to expatriate the delirium.

But Charny rebelled against the first attempts. He fastened upon the doctor his eyes sparkling with anger; told him that he was the guest of the king, and that no one had the right to drive away a man to whom the king had offered a shelter. The doctor, who was not patient with intractable convalescents, ordered four valets to come in and quietly remove the wounded man. But Charny caught hold of the frame of his bed, and struck violently one of the men, threatening the others like Charles XII. at Bender.

Doctor Louis tried reasoning. At first Charny was logical enough; but when the valets persisted, he made such an effort that the wound re-opened, and his reason seemed to leave him with the flowing of his blood. He was seized with an attack of delirium more violent than the first. Then he began to cry out that they wished to deprive him of his visions; but it was all in vain, his visions still smiled on him, and she who loved him would come to see him in spite of the doctor's opposition, for she was of too high rank to regard the opposition of any one.

On hearing these words, the doctor, trembling, hastened to dismiss the servants and to sew up the wound, and soon had his patient, physically, in a satisfactory state. But he could not arrest the delirium, which increased to an alarming degree. The situation had so changed in one day that Doctor Louis began to think of resorting to heroic remedies. The sick man would not only ruin himself, he would ruin the queen. From speaking, he passed to shrieking; he began with remembering, and ended with inventing; and the worst feature of the case was that in his lucid moments — and they were many — he was madder than in his fits of madness.

Deeply embarrassed, the doctor, being unable to appeal to the authority of the king, — since the invalid also appealed to that, — determined to go and speak to the queen; and he chose for this purpose a time when Charny was sleeping, fatigued with relating his dreams, and calling up his visions.

He found Marie Antoinette thoughtful, and at the same time radiant with pleasure; for she expected the doctor to give a good account of his patient. But she was much surprised; to her very first question the doctor replied sharply, that the patient was very ill.

"What!" cried the queen, "yesterday he was doing well."

"No, Madame, he was doing very badly."

"Yet I sent Misery, and you replied by a good bulletin."

"I allowed myself to be deceived, and wished to deceive you also."

"What does that mean?" replied the queen, turning very pale. "If he is ill why conceal it from me? What should I fear, Doctor, except a misfortune which is too common, alas!"

"Madame —"

"And if he is doing well, why increase my anxiety, very natural when it concerns a good servant of the king? Therefore, answer frankly, — yes, or no. Is the patient in danger?"

"There is less danger for him than for others, Madame."

"Now the enigmas begin, Doctor," said the queen, impatiently. "Explain yourself."

"It is difficult, Madame," replied the doctor. "It is enough for you to know that the malady of the Comte de Charny is wholly moral. The wound is only an accessory to the sufferings, an occasion for the delirium."

"A moral sickness! Monsieur de Charny!"

"Yes, Madame; and I designate as moral everything that cannot be analyzed by the scalpel. Spare me the pain of saying anything more about it to your Majesty."

"You mean to say that the count —" the queen insisted.

"Do you still wish me to tell you?"

"Of course I wish it."

"Well, I mean that the count is in love; that is what I mean to say. Your Majesty demands an explanation; there it is."

The queen gave a little shrug of the shoulders which signified, "A pretty piece of business!"

"And do you think that can be cured in the same way that a wound is cured, Madame?" continued the doctor. "No; the evil increases, and from temporary delirium Monsieur de Charny will sink into a fatal monomania. Then —"

"Then, Doctor?"

"You will have ruined that young man, Madame."

"Indeed, Doctor, you have most astonishing ways. I shall have ruined this young man! Am I, then, the cause of his madness?"

"Certainly."

"But you shock me, Doctor."

"If you are not the cause of it now," pursued the inflexible doctor, shrugging his shoulders, "you will be later."

"Give me your advice, then, since it is your profession," said the queen, somewhat pacified.

"That is to say, I must give a prescription."

"If you will."

"Here it is, then: 'The young man must be cured by balm or by iron; let the woman whose name he constantly invokes kill him or cure him.'"

"There you exaggerate again," interrupted the queen, becoming impatient. "Kill — cure — grand words! Can you kill a man with a harsh word? Can you cure a poor madman with a smile?"

"Ah! if you are incredulous, — you too," said the doctor; "there is nothing more for me to do but to present my very humble respects to your Majesty."

"But, in the first place, tell me, does it concern me?"

"I know nothing about it, and do not wish to know anything. I only repeat to you that Monsieur de Charny is a reasonable madman; that reason can at once render a man mad and kill him; that madness may render him rea-

sonable and cure him. So, when you wish to free this palace from shrieks, dreams, and scandal, you must act."

"What shall I do?"

"Ah, what? I only make prescriptions; I do not advise. Am I sure of having heard what I have heard, of having seen what I have seen?"

"Come, suppose I understood you, what would happen?"

"Two fortunate things: one, the best for you as for us all, that the sick man, pierced to the heart by that infallible stiletto called reason, would see the termination of his agony, which is just beginning; the other — well — the other — Ah, Madame, excuse me, I was wrong in seeing two issues from this labyrinth. There is only one for Marie Antoinette, for the queen of France."

"I understand you; you have spoken with frankness, Doctor. It is right that the woman on account of whom Monsieur de Charny has lost his reason should return it to him, either by kindness or by force."

"Very well! That is what I mean."

"She must have the courage to go to him and wrest his dreams from him, — that is, the gnawing serpent which is coiled up in the very depths of his soul."

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Then I will send for some one; Mademoiselle de Taverney, for example."

"Mademoiselle de Taverney?" said the doctor.

"Yes; you will have everything ready for the wounded man to receive us comfortably."

"It is done, Madame."

"Without any warning?"

"It must be so."

"But," murmured the queen, "this responsibility for

the life or death of a man is more dreadful than you think."

"It is what I assume every day, when I meet with an unknown disease. Shall I attack it by a remedy which kills the disease, or by a remedy which kills the patient?"

"You, — you are very sure of killing the patient, are you not?" said the queen, with a shudder.

"Eh!" said the doctor, with a gloomy air, "even if a man should die for the honor of a queen, how many die every day for the caprice of a king? Come, Madame, come."

The queen sighed and followed the doctor, without waiting for Andrée, who was not to be found.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning; Charny, completely dressed, was sleeping in an arm-chair after the agitation of a terrible night. The window blinds, carefully closed, allowed but a feeble glimmer of light to enter the room. Everything was arranged to soothe the nervous sensibility of the sick man. There was no sound, nothing to touch him, nothing to disturb his sight. Doctor Louis had arranged everything to prevent, if possible, a renewal of the delirious outbreaks. Nevertheless, determined on striking a decisive blow, he did not shrink from a crisis which might even kill his patient. It is true that it might also save him.

The queen, in a morning robe, with her hair elegantly dressed, abruptly entered the corridor which led to Charny's room. The doctor had recommended her not to hesitate, not to knock; but to appear before him suddenly and with resolution, in order to produce a violent effect. She therefore turned so suddenly the knob of the door of the antechamber that a person leaning against the door of Charny's room, — a woman enveloped in a mantle, — had not time to

straighten up and regain her self-possession. The agitated countenance and trembling hands of this woman certainly were not indicative of tranquillity.

"Andrée!" cried the queen, in surprise. "You here?"

"I!" replied Andrée, pale and agitated, "I! yes, your Majesty. I! but is not your Majesty here yourself?"

"Oh, oh! a complication," murmured the doctor.

"I looked for you everywhere," said the queen; "where were you?" There was something in these words of the queen which did not express her usual kindness. It was like the beginning of an examination; it was like the announcement of a suspicion.

Andrée was alarmed. She feared especially that her indiscreet step would furnish a clew to her sentiments, so terrible even to herself. Therefore, proud as she was, she determined to utter falsehood for the second time. "Here, as you see," she said.

"Doubtless; but why are you here?"

"Madame," she replied, "they told me that your Majesty had sent for me; therefore I came."

The queen mistrusted still; she persisted in her inquiry. "How did you discover where I had gone?"

"It was easy, Madame; you were with Monsieur le Docteur Louis, and you were seen passing through the small apartments; of course, you could have been coming only to this pavilion."

"Well guessed," continued the queen, still unsatisfied, but speaking not unkindly, — "well guessed."

Andrée made a last effort. "Madame," she said, smiling, "if your Majesty had intended secrecy, you would not have appeared in the open galleries as you did just now in coming here. When the queen crosses the terrace Mademoiselle de Taverney can see her from her apartment,

and it is not difficult to follow or precede a person whom we can see at a distance."

"She is right," said the queen; "a hundred times right. I have an unfortunate habit, that of never foreseeing anything; reflecting so little myself, I forget the possibility of reflection in others."

The queen felt, perhaps, that she ought to show indulgence, since she had need of a confidant. Her soul, moreover, not being a compound of coquetry and distrust, like the souls of common women, she had faith in her friendships, knowing that she was able to love. Women who distrust themselves are still more distrustful of others. A great misfortune which coquettes have to endure is that they never believe themselves loved by their lovers.

Marie Antoinette, therefore, quickly forgot the impression produced on her by finding Mademoiselle de Taverney before Charny's door. She took Andrée's hand, made her turn the key in the door, and quickly passing before her, she entered the sick man's chamber, while the doctor and Andrée remained without. When the latter saw the queen thus disappear, she raised toward Heaven a look full of wrath and suffering, — a look that resembled an imprecation. The doctor took her by the arm and led her into the corridor, saying, "Do you think she will succeed?"

"Succeed! Good God! in what?"

"In persuading that poor man to allow himself to be taken away before he dies here of his fever."

"He would, then, be cured should he go away?" cried Andrée.

The doctor looked at her with surprise and uneasiness.

"I think so," he said.

"Oh, may she, then, succeed!" said the poor girl.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONVALESCENCE.

THE queen had walked straight to the arm-chair in which Charny was reclining. The latter, roused by the creaking of her shoes on the floor, looked up. "The queen!" he murmured, trying to rise.

"The queen, yes, Monsieur," Marie Antoinette hastened to say, — "the queen, who knows how you are striving to lose both your reason and your life; the queen, whom you offend in your dreams; the queen, whom you offend when awake; the queen, who has regard for her own honor and your safety! That is her reason for coming to you, Monsieur; and it is not thus you should receive her."

Charny had risen, trembling, bewildered, and at her last words had fallen upon his knees, so overwhelmed by physical suffering and mental anguish that, bowed down like a guilty man, he had neither the strength nor the will to rise.

"Is it possible," continued the queen, touched by this respect and silence, — "is it possible that a gentleman, formerly renowned for his loyalty, can persist in endangering the reputation of a woman? For observe this, Monsieur de Charny, that from our first interview it is not the queen who has appeared to you, but a woman; and you should never have forgotten it."

Charny, much affected by these words, which seemed to come from the heart, endeavored to say a word in his

own defence; but Marie Antoinette did not give him time.

"What can I expect of my enemies," she said, "if you give an example of treason?"

"Treason —" stammered Charny.

"Monsieur, you must choose. Either you are mad, and I must prevent you from doing harm; or you are a traitor, and I must punish you."

"Madame, do not say that I am a traitor. From the lips of a king this accusation precedes a sentence of death; from the lips of a woman it means dishonor. As a queen, kill me; as a woman, spare me."

"Are you in your right mind, Monsieur de Charny?" said the queen, in an agitated voice.

"Yes, Madame."

"Are you conscious of the wrong committed against me, of your crime against — the king?"

"My God!" murmured the unfortunate man.

"For you gentlemen forget too easily that the king is the husband of that woman whom you insult by even looking upon her; the king is the father of your future sovereign, my dauphin. The king is a man greater and better than you all, — a man whom I venerate and whom I love."

"Oh!" murmured Charny, with a groan; and he was obliged to place one hand on the floor to support himself.

His cry pierced the queen's heart. She read in the young man's face that he would be stricken with death if she did not promptly draw from the wound the barb she had buried there. It was for this reason that, merciful and kind, and terrified at the paleness and weakness of the culprit, she for a moment thought of calling for aid. But she reflected that the doctor and Andrée might inter-

pret wrongly this fainting-fit of the sick man. She therefore raised him up herself.

"Let us speak," she said, "I as queen, you as a man. Doctor Louis has tried to cure you; this wound, which amounted to nothing, has been rendered dangerous by the extravagances of your brain. When shall this wound be healed? When will you cease to give the good doctor the scandalous spectacle of a madness which causes him anxiety?"

"Madame," stammered Charny, "your Majesty drives me away, I will go away;" and he made so violent an effort to leave the room that, losing his balance, he tottered and fell into the arms of the queen, who had placed herself between him and the door.

Scarcely had he felt the contact of that warm breast which supported him, — scarcely was he enfolded in the involuntary embrace of the arms which held him, when his reason abandoned him entirely; a light breath escaped his lips, which was not a word, and did not dare to be a kiss.

The queen, herself agitated by this close contact, moved by this weakness, had time only to push from her the inanimate body toward the easy-chair, on which it fell; she would then have fled. But Charny's head had fallen back and struck the frame of the chair; a light-red tinge colored the froth which rose to his lips, and a warm drop fell on the hand of Marie Antoinette.

"Oh, so much the better!" he murmured; "just as I would have wished. I shall die, killed by you."

The queen forgot everything. She came back, seized Charny in her arms, pressed his head upon her bosom, and placed her icy hand upon the young man's heart. Love performed a miracle; Charny revived. He opened his eyes, and the vision disappeared. The woman was

alarmed when she reflected that she had left a tender remembrance where she intended to leave only a last farewell. She started for the door in such haste that Charny had just time to seize the hem of her dress, exclaiming, "Madame, in the name of the reverence I have for God, less than that which I have for you — "

"Adieu, adieu!" said the queen.

"Madame, oh, pardon me!"

"I pardon you, Monsieur de Charny."

"Madame, one last look!"

"Monsieur de Charny," said the queen, trembling with tenderness and wrath, "if you are not the most miserable of men, you will this night, or to-morrow, either have died or left the palace."

A queen entreats when she commands in such terms as these. Charny, clasping his hands in frenzy, crept on his knees to the feet of Marie Antoinette. The latter had already opened the door to escape the danger more quickly.

Andrée, whose eyes were fixed on that door, saw the young man prostrate, and the queen almost fainting; she saw Charny's eyes shining with hope and pride, and those of the queen downcast, without expression. Struck to the heart, despairing, filled with hatred and scorn, she did not bow her head on seeing the queen return. It seemed to her that God had given too much to this woman in bestowing upon her a throne and beauty, — both superfluous since he had given her this half-hour with Monsieur de Charny.

The doctor, wholly occupied with the success of the negotiation undertaken by the queen, confined himself to saying, "Well, Madame?"

The queen paused a moment to collect herself, and recover her voice, stifled by the beating of her heart.

"What will he do?" said the doctor.

"He will go away," murmured the queen. And without paying any attention to Andrée, who knitted her brows, or to the doctor, who rubbed his hands, she crossed with a rapid step the corridor of the gallery, drawing about her mechanically her lace mantle, and withdrew to her apartment.

Andrée pressed the doctor's hand, who hastened to return to his patient; then, with a step solemn as that of a ghost, she returned to her own room, with her head bowed down, her eyes fixed, and her mind wandering. She had not thought of asking the queen's commands. To a nature like hers the queen was nothing, the rival everything.

Charny, once more under the care of the doctor, did not seem to be the same man that he had been the evening before. Making an extravagant show of strength and hardihood, he plied the doctor so vigorously with questions about his approaching convalescence, the regimen he was to follow, and the means of going away, that the doctor feared a more dangerous relapse, produced by a mania of another nature.

Charny soon undeceived him; he resembled those red-hot irons whose color fades as the intensity of the heat diminishes. The iron is black, and is not hot to the eye, but is yet sufficiently so to consume everything it touches.

The doctor saw that the young man was recovering his calmness and the reasoning power of his days of health. Charny was really so reasonable that he felt obliged to explain to the doctor this sudden change in his determination. "The queen," he said, "by making me ashamed. has cured me quicker than your science, dear Doctor, could have done with your excellent remedies; to attack my self-love, you see, is to master me as they master a horse with a bit."

"So much the better, so much the better," murmured the doctor.

"Yes; I remember that a Spaniard — they are very boastful — told me one day, in order to prove his power of will, that in a duel in which he had been wounded, by merely willing to retain his blood he had been able to prevent its flowing to rejoice the heart of his adversary. I laughed at this Spaniard, yet I am somewhat like him; if my fever, if this delirium with which you reproach me, should show any sign of returning, I would engage to drive them away by saying, 'Delirium and fever, you shall not return!'"

"We have examples of this will-power," said the doctor, gravely. "At any rate, allow me to congratulate you. You are now morally cured?"

"Oh! yes."

"Well, it will not be long before you see the relation between man's moral and physical organization. It is a beautiful theory on which I would publish a book if I had the time. Now that you are sound in mind, you will be sound in body in less than a week."

"Dear Doctor, I thank you."

"And you will begin, then, by going away?"

"Immediately, if you will."

"Let us wait until evening. Let us proceed moderately. To move hastily is always a risk."

"We will wait until this evening, Doctor."

"Are you going far?"

"To the end of the world if necessary."

"That is rather too far for a first journey," said the doctor, with his usual coolness. "We will be satisfied with Versailles to begin with, eh!"

"Versailles it shall be, since you wish it."

"It seems to me," said the doctor, "that there is no

need of expatriating yourself, just because you are cured of your wound."

This coolness put Charny on his guard.

"It is true, Doctor. I have a house at Versailles."

"Well, that is what we want; you shall be taken there this evening."

"You have not understood me, Doctor; I wished to make a journey to my estate!"

"Ah, why did you not say so, then? But your estates are not at the end of the world."

"They are on the frontiers of Picardy, fifteen or eighteen leagues from here."

"As I said, that is not far away."

Charny pressed the doctor's hand as if to thank him for his delicacy.

That evening the four valets who had been so rudely treated at their first appearance, carried Charny to his carriage, which awaited him at the gate.

The king, having hunted all day, had just taken supper and was sleeping. Charny, rather disturbed at going away without taking leave, was reassured by the doctor, who promised to excuse his departure on the pretext of the need of change.

Charny, before getting into his carriage, allowed himself the painful satisfaction of gazing, — even until the very last moment, — at the windows in the apartment of the queen. No one could see him. One of the lackeys, carrying a torch in his hand, lighted the way, without allowing the glare to fall upon his face. Charny met upon the steps only a few officers, his friends, who had been forewarned of his departure, so that it might not have the appearance of flight.

Escorted to the carriage by these pleasant companions, Charny could allow his eyes to wander over the windows;

those of the queen were brilliantly lighted. Her Majesty, not very well, had received her ladies in her bedchamber. Those of Andrée, dark and gloomy, concealed behind the folds of the curtains a very anxious woman, with palpitating heart, who followed unseen the movements of the sick man and his escort.

The carriage finally departed, but so slowly that every step of the horses resounded on the hard pavement.

"If he is not mine," murmured Andrée, "at least he belongs to no one else."

"If the desire to die should return to him," said the doctor, as he entered his own room, "at least he will not die on my hands. Confound these maladies of the soul! one is not the physician of Antiochus and Stratonice to cure such maladies."

Charny arrived safe and sound at his own house. The doctor went to see him the same night, and found him so well that he hastened to announce that this would be his last visit. The sick man had for his supper the wing of a chicken and a spoonful of Orléans preserves.

The next day he received a visit of his uncle Monsieur de Suffren, and of Monsieur de Lafayette; he received also a messenger from the king. It was very nearly the same on the following day, and after that he was left to himself.

At the end of a week he was able to ride an easy horse; his strength had returned. His house not being sufficiently secluded, he asked of his uncle's physician, and of Doctor Louis also, permission to depart for his estates.

Doctor Louis replied, with confidence, that locomotion was the final remedy in the curing of wounds; that Monsieur de Charny had a good travelling-carriage; and that the road to Picardy was smooth as a mirror; and that to remain at Versailles when one could travel so comfortably would be perfect folly.

Charny had a large baggage-wagon loaded; he went to take leave of the king, who overwhelmed him with kindness; begged Monsieur de Suffren to present his respects to the queen, who was ill that evening and did not receive. Then entering his carriage at the very gate of the royal palace, he set out for the little town of Villers-Cotterets, from which he would proceed to the Château de Boursonnes, situated at about a league distant from that little town which the first poems of Dumoustier had already rendered illustrious.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO BLEEDING HEARTS.

On the day following that on which the queen had been surprised by Andrée, as she fled from Charny on his knees before her, Mademoiselle de Taverney entered, according to her custom, the royal bedchamber at the hour of the morning toilet, before going to Mass.

The queen had not yet received any visitors. She had just read a note from Madame de La Motte, and was in a pleasant mood.

Andrée, paler still than she had been the evening before, displayed in her whole demeanor that serious and cold reserve which attracts attention and compels those of the highest rank to account to the most humble. Simple, severe one might say, in her toilet, Andrée had the appearance of a harbinger of misfortune, either for herself or for others.

It was one of the queen's days of absent-mindedness; therefore she paid no attention to this quiet and serious demeanor of Andrée, — her red eyes, the whiteness of her temples and hands. She turned her head just enough to allow her friendly greeting to be heard, "Good morning, little one."

Andrée waited until the queen should give her an opportunity to speak. She waited, very sure that her silence, her immobility, would finally attract the eyes of Marie Antoinette. And she was right. Receiving no response but that of a ceremonious reverence, the queen turned her

head and caught a side view of her face, which expressed such sorrow and severity.

"My God! what is the matter, Andrée?" she said, turning quite round: "has any misfortune happened to you?"

"A great misfortune, yes, Madame," replied the young woman.

"What is it, then?"

"I am going to leave your Majesty."

"Leave me! You are going away?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Where are you going, then? What is the cause of this hasty departure?"

"Madame, I am not happy in my affections —"

The queen looked up.

"My family affections," added Andrée, blushing.

The queen blushed in her turn, and their glances met with a flash like that made by the clashing of two swords.

The queen recovered herself first. "I do not understand," she said; "you were happy yesterday, I thought."

"No, Madame," replied Andrée, firmly; "yesterday was one of the unhappy days of my life."

"Ah!" said the queen, becoming thoughtful. "Explain yourself," she added.

"It would be necessary to fatigue your Majesty with details quite beneath your notice. I have no satisfaction in my family; I have nothing more to hope for in the world; and I come now to ask leave of your Majesty that I may retire to a convent."

The queen rose, and although this petition touched her pride, she approached Andrée and took her hand.

"What is the meaning of this foolish resolution?" she

said; "had you not yesterday, as you have to-day, a brother, a father? Were they less troublesome and less harmful than they are to-day? Do you think me capable of neglecting you when you are in trouble? Am I not a mother who receives into her family those who have no mother?"

Andrée trembled like a guilty person, and bowing before the queen she said, "Madame, your goodness penetrates my heart, but it cannot dissuade me. I have resolved to leave the court. I have need of solitude. Do not expose me to unfaithfulness in my duty toward you through the lack of capacity for them which I find in myself."

"Since yesterday?"

"I beg your Majesty not to ask me to speak on this subject."

"Be free," said the queen, bitterly; "only you might have returned the confidence I have so freely given you. But it is foolish to question one who will not speak. Keep your secrets, Mademoiselle, and I hope you will be happier away than you have been here. Only remember one thing, — that my friendship never deserts those I love, whatever may be their caprices, and that I shall never cease to regard you as a friend. Now, Andrée, go; you are free."

Andrée made a reverence and turned to leave the room. When she had reached the door, the queen called her back. "Where are you going, Andrée?"

"To the Abbey of Saint Denis, Madame," replied Mademoiselle de Taverney.

"To the convent! oh! very well, Mademoiselle. Perhaps you have nothing with which to reproach yourself; but had you only ingratitude and forgetfulness that would be too much! You are very culpable toward me Go, Mademoiselle de Taverney; go."

The result was that without offering any explanations, which the queen in her goodness of heart had expected, without showing any humility, any emotion, Andrée availed herself of the permission of the queen and disappeared. Marie Antoinette could, and actually did, perceive that Mademoiselle de Taverney left the palace immediately.

In fact, Andrée repaired to her father's house, where, as she had expected, she found Philippe in the garden. The brother meditated, the sister acted.

At sight of Andreé, whom her service required to be at this hour at the palace, Philippe advanced, surprised and almost alarmed. Alarmed especially by that gloomy countenance, since his sister never met him but with a smile of tender affection, he began, as the queen had done, by questioning.

Andrée informed him that she had just left the service of the queen; that her resignation had been accepted, and that she was about to enter a convent. Philippe clapped his hands together violently, like a man who has received an unexpected blow.

"What!" he said; "you too, sister?"

"What! I too? What do you mean?"

"It is, then, an accursed contact for our family, that of the Bourbons?" he cried; "you feel compelled to take religious vows! you, religious by inclination, religious in soul; you, the least worldly of women, and at the same time the least capable of lasting obedience to the rules of asceticism. Come, tell me, what complaint have you against the queen?"

"I make no complaint against the queen," replied the young girl, coldly. "You, who had reckoned so confidently on favor at court, you who, more than any other, had a right to count upon it, — why have you not been

able to remain there? Why did you stay there only three days? I have been there three years!"

"The queen is sometimes capricious, Andrée."

"If that is so, Philippe, you ought to be able to endure it, — you, a man. I, a woman, ought not to endure it, and I will not. She has her caprices, — very well, her servants are there."

"All this, sister," said the young man, with some constraint, "does not acquaint me with the occasion of your misunderstanding with the queen."

"I have had no misunderstanding with her, I assure you. Had you, Philippe, when you left her? Oh, she is an ungrateful woman!"

"You must forgive her, Andrée. Flattery has injured her somewhat, but she is good at heart."

"As is proved, perhaps, by her conduct toward you, Philippe."

"To what do you refer?"

"You have forgotten already? Oh! I have a better memory. So, in one and the same day, with one and the same resolution, I pay your debt and mine, Philippe."

"Too dearly, it seems to me, Andrée; a woman should not renounce the world at your age, with your beauty. Take care, my dear; if you leave the world now you will regret it when you are old, and will return to it then only to find all your friends estranged from you."

"You did not reason thus, — you, a brave officer, the soul of honor and fine feeling, but caring so little for renown or riches, that where others have acquired titles and gold, you have only contracted debts and fallen in rank, — you did not reason thus, when you said: 'She is capricious, Andrée, she is a coquette, she is perfidious; I prefer not to remain in her service.' Therefore, practically, you have renounced the world, although you may not

have entered a monastery; and of us two, the one who comes nearest to taking irrevocable vows is not I who have yet to take them, but you who have already done so."

"You are right, sister, and but for our father — "

"Our father, — ah, Philippe, do not speak thus," replied Andrée, with bitterness. "Ought not a father to be the support of his children, or to accept support from them? It is on these conditions only that he is a father. And I ask, what is our father to us? Have you ever thought of such a thing as confiding a secret to Monsieur de Taverney? Do you believe him capable of confiding in you? No," continued Andrée, with an expression of sorrow, "no, Monsieur de Taverney is a man to live alone."

"I know it, Andrée, but he should not die alone."

These words, spoken with mild severity, reminded Andrée that she was allowing her angry feelings and her hatred of the world to occupy too large a place in her heart.

"I do not wish," she answered, "that you should consider me a daughter without affection; you know that I am a tender sister; but every one in this world has conspired to destroy in me every instinct of sympathy. God gave me at birth, as to every human creature, a soul and a body; with this soul and body every human creature can do as he pleases, for his own happiness in this world and in the world to come. One man whom I knew, took my soul, — Balsamo. A man whom I scarcely knew, and who was not a man in my opinion, took my body, — Gilbert. I tell you, Philippe, that in order to be a good and pious daughter, I needed but a father. But with regard to you, let us see what benefit the service of the great ones of the earth has conferred upon you who loved them."

Philippe hung his head. "Spare me," he said; "the great ones of the earth were in my eyes only creatures similar to myself. I loved them; God has commanded us to love one another."

"Oh, Philippe!" she said, "it never happens upon this earth that the loving heart responds directly to the one who loves it; those whom we have chosen, choose others."

Philippe raised his pale face and contemplated his sister for some time with no expression but that of astonishment. "Why do you say that? what are you driving at?" he asked.

"Nothing, nothing," replied Andrée, generously, who shrank from the idea of going into details and from an exchange of confidences. "I am stricken, brother, I think my mind is wandering; do not pay any attention to my words."

"And yet —"

Andrée came to Philippe, and took his hand. "Enough on this subject, my beloved brother. I have come to entreat you to take me to a convent; I have chosen Saint Denis. Do not be alarmed. I do not mean to take the vows, that will come later if necessary. Instead of seeking in an asylum what most women wish to find there, — forgetfulness, — I go there to remember. It seems to me that I have too long forgotten the Lord. He is the only king, the only sovereign, the one consolation, as he is the only real afflictor. By drawing near to him, now that I understand him, I shall have done more for my happiness than if all the power and love in the world had conspired to make my life happy. Oh for solitude, brother, — solitude, that vestibule of eternal blessedness! In solitude God speaks to the heart of man; in solitude man speaks to the heart of God."

Philippe interrupted Andrée, with a gesture. "Remem-

ber," he said, "that I oppose, morally, this desperate purpose; you have not allowed me to judge of the reasons for your despair."

"Despair!" she said, with an expression of supreme scorn; "you said despair! Ah, thank God, I do not leave the court in despair! I! regret it with despair! No, no, a thousand times, no!" and with a movement full of indignant pride she threw over her shoulders a silk mantle which lay near her on a chair.

"This excess of disdain shows a state of mind which cannot last," said Philippe. "You do not like the word 'despair,' Andrée; accept instead the word 'spite.'"

"Spite!" replied the young woman, with a smile full of pride. "You cannot believe, brother, that Mademoiselle de Taverney is so weak as to give up her position in the world from a feeling of spite. Spite is the weakness of coquettes or fools. The eye which is lighted by spite soon overflows with tears, and the fire is extinguished. I have no spite, Philippe. I wish that you would believe me; and in order to do so, you need only examine your own heart when you have some grievance to state. Answer me, Philippe, if to-morrow you should retire to La Trappe, if you should become a Carthusian, what would you call the cause which drove you to this resolution?"

"I should call it an incurable sorrow, sister," said Philippe, with the gentle dignity of an unhappy man.

"Well, Philippe, that is a word which suits me, and which I adopt. It is therefore an incurable sorrow which impels me to seek solitude."

"Well," said Philippe, "brother and sister will not have been unlike in their lives. Once equally happy, they will have still been unhappy in the same degree."

Andrée thought that Philippe, carried away by his emotion, would question her further, and perhaps his inflex-

ible heart would be broken under the pressure of fraternal affection. But Philippe knew from experience that great souls are sufficient unto themselves; therefore he did not disturb Andrée in the stronghold she had chosen.

"On what day, and at what hour, do you intend to set out?" he asked.

"To-morrow, — to-day, even, if there were time."

"Will you not take a last walk with me in the park?"

"No," she said.

He understood by the pressure of the hand which accompanied this refusal that the young woman did not wish to give him an opportunity to work upon her feelings.

"I will be ready whenever you require me," he replied; and he kissed her hand, without another word, which might have caused the bitterness in their hearts to overflow.

Andrée, after having made some preparations for her departure, retired to her room, where she received this note from Philippe, —

"You can see our father at five o'clock this evening. Your taking leave of him is indispensable. Monsieur de Taverney would complain of being deserted, of being treated unkindly."

She answered, —

"At five o'clock I will be with Monsieur de Taverney, and in my travelling-dress. At seven o'clock we can be at Saint Denis. Can you give me your evening?"

For answer, Philippe called out of his window, which was so near to Andrée's room that she could hear him, "At five o'clock let the horses be put to the travelling carriage."

CHAPTER XVI.

A MINISTER OF FINANCE.

The queen, before receiving Andrée, had read a note from Madame de La Motte, at which she had smiled. This note contained these words, with all the proper formularies of respect, —

"And your Majesty may rest assured that credit will be granted you, and that the goods will be delivered confidentially."

Therefore the queen had smiled and burned Jeanne's little note. While she was still somewhat gloomy from her interview with Mademoiselle de Taverney, Madame de Misery came to announce that Monsieur de Calonne was waiting for the honor of an audience.

Monsieur de Calonne was a man of infinite talent, who, belonging to the generation born in the latter half of the century, little accustomed to tears and very fond of reasoning, had taken his decision with regard to the misfortune which hung over France, joined his interest with the common interest, said, as Louis XV. had said, "After us the end of the world;" and sought in every direction for flowers wherewith to deck his last moments. He understood affairs, and he was an accomplished courtier. Every woman celebrated for her wit, her riches, or her beauty he had addressed with homage, like that which the bee renders to the plants loaded with aroma and with sweets.

The conversation of seven or eight men and ten to twelve women contained at that time a summary of all

knowledge. Monsieur de Calonne could calculate with D'Alembert, reason with Diderot, scoff with Voltaire, dream with Rousseau. Indeed, he was strong enough to laugh openly at the popularity of Monsieur Necker, — Monsieur Necker, the wise and profound, whose system of finance had illumined all France. Calonne, having observed him from every point of view, had finally rendered him ridiculous, even in the eyes of those who feared him most; both the king and the queen, who shuddered at that name, trembled when they heard him mocked in a good-natured way by an elegant statesman who satisfied himself with this reply to such an array of figures, "Of what use to prove that we can prove nothing?"

In fact, Necker had proved only one thing, — his inability to direct the finances. Monsieur de Calonne, however, accepted their management as a burden too light for his shoulders; and from the very first moment one might say that he bent beneath the load.

What did Monsieur Necker want? Reforms. These partial reforms alarmed all minds. Few people profited by them, and those who did profited little; on the contrary, many lost, and lost much. When Necker tried to establish a more just division of taxes, when he undertook to levy taxes on the estates of the nobility and the revenues of the clergy, he was abruptly attempting an impossible revolution. He was dividing the nation and weakening it, when he should have directed all his energy toward leading it on to a general reformation. He pointed out this goal, and by indicating it made its attainment impossible. To speak of reforming an abuse to those who do not wish the abuse reformed is to invite opposition. Is it well to warn the enemy of your intended assault?

This was fully comprehended by Calonne, more truly a

friend of the nation, as far as this was concerned, than the Genevese, Necker, — more a friend, we say, as to accomplished facts; for instead of seeking to prevent an inevitable evil, Calonne accelerated the invasion of the scourge. His plan was bold, gigantic, sure; it was to draw into bankruptcy in two years the king and nobility, who would have delayed it for ten years. Then, the bankruptcy being accomplished, he would say, "Now, you who are rich, pay for the poor; for they are hungry, and will devour those who will not feed them."

How it was that the king did not foresee the consequences of this plan, or even divine the plan itself; how it was that the bandage over his eyes seemed to become thicker; how it was that the queen, generally so clear-sighted, was as blind as her husband as to the conduct of this minister, — on these points our history, or rather our romance, and for this it will be welcome, will give some indispensable details.

Monsieur de Calonne entered the queen's apartment. He was tall, handsome, and of distinguished manners. He was a man to make queens laugh and mistresses weep. Well assured that Marie Antoinette had sent for him under the pressure of some urgent need, he entered with a smile on his lips. So many others would have entered with a frowning face, in order to increase the merit of their consent. The queen also was very gracious. She asked the minister to be seated, and said to him a thousand things about nothing. At length she said, "Have we any money, my dear Monsieur de Calonne?"

"Money?" cried Monsieur de Calonne. "Why, yes, we always have money."

"This is very wonderful," replied the queen. "I have known no one but you to give that answer to a demand for money. As a financier you are incomparable."

"How much does your Majesty want?" replied Calonne.

"Explain to me in the first place, I beg of you, how it is that you find money where Monsieur Necker said so often that there was none."

"Monsieur Necker was right, Madame; there was no money in the coffers. On the day of my accession to the ministry, November 5, 1783, — one does not forget such things, Madame, — on examining the public treasury I found only two bags, each containing twelve hundred francs. There was not a farthing less."

The queen laughed. "Very well?" said she.

"Well, Madame, if Monsieur Necker, instead of saying, 'There is no money,' had set himself to work borrowing money, as I have done, — one hundred millions the first year, and one hundred and twenty-five the second, — if he had been sure, as I am, of obtaining for the third year a new loan of eighty millions, Monsieur Necker would have been a true financier. Any one can say, 'There is no money in the treasury;' but it is not every one who can say, 'There shall be money there!'"

"That is what I was saying to you; it was for this reason that I congratulated you. But how are these loans to be repaid? There is the difficulty."

"Oh, Madame," replied Calonne, with a smile of which no human eye could measure the profound, the frightful significance, "I will answer for it, — they shall be paid."

"Have you any new ideas? If so, let me be the first to share them, I beg of you."

"I have an idea, Madame, which will put twenty millions into the pockets of the French, and seven or eight millions into your — I beg pardon — into his Majesty's coffers."

"Those millions will be welcome in both places; but how are they to be obtained?"

"Your Majesty is aware that gold coin is not of the same value in all the States of Europe?"

"I know it. In Spain gold is of more value than in France."

"Your Majesty is right; it is a pleasure to converse with you upon finance. Gold has been worth in Spain, for the last five or six years, something like eight per cent more than in France; so that there is a gain of about eight francs on every ounce of gold exported."

"That is considerable," remarked the queen.

"So much that in a year, if the capitalists knew what I know, there would not remain with us a solitary louis d'or."

"You propose to prevent that result?"

"Immediately, Madame. I am about to increase the price of gold six and two-thirds per cent. Your Majesty will see that not a louis will remain in private coffers when it is known that the Mint will pay that premium on gold. The gold will then be recoined, and every marc will comprise thirty-two louis, instead of thirty as at the present time."

"A present profit and a future profit!" cried the queen. "It is a charming idea, which will win you great applause."

"I hope so, Madame; and I am glad that it is so fully approved by you."

"If you continue to entertain projects like that, I am sure that you will pay all our debts."

"Permit me, Madame, to come back to the subject of your Majesty's wishes?"

"Is it possible, Monsieur, for me to have at this moment —"

"What amount?"

"Oh, a sum much too large, perhaps."

Calonne smiled in a way to encourage the queen.

"Five hundred thousand francs," she said.

"Ah, Madame, how your Majesty frightened me! I thought you were about to make a demand for a serious amount."

"You can let me have it, then?"

"Certainly."

"And without the king — "

"Ah, Madame, that would be impossible. All my accounts are submitted monthly to the king; but he has never been known to read them, — which I consider an honor to myself."

"When may I count on receiving it?"

"When would your Majesty like to have it!"

"Not until the fifth of next month."

"The accounts will be audited on the second; you will have your money on the third, Madame."

"Monsieur de Calonne, I thank you."

"My greatest happiness is to please your Majesty. Do not hesitate to have recourse to my strong-box. It will be a pleasure to your controller-general of finance to be of service to you." He had risen while speaking, and bowed in his most graceful manner.

The queen gave him her hand to kiss. "One word more," she said; "I have some remorse in asking for this money."

"Remorse!" he said.

"Yes; it is to gratify a caprice."

"So much the better, so much the better. Of that sum, then, at least one half will be disbursed to the advantage of our industry, our commerce, or our pleasures."

"That is true, certainly," murmured the queen, "and you have a charming way of consoling me, Monsieur."

"God be praised, Madame! may we never have other remorse than such as your Majesty speaks of, and we shall go straight to Paradise."

"You see, Monsieur de Calonne, it would be too cruel for me to make the poor people pay for my caprices."

"Oh, well," said the minister, with a sinister smile and emphasizing every word, "have no more scruples, Madame, for I declare to you, that it will never be the poor people who will have it to pay."

"How so?" said the queen, in surprise.

"Because the poor people have nothing left," replied the minister, coolly; "and where there is nothing to be had, the king loses his rights." He bowed and left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

Scarcely had Monsieur de Calonne crossed the gallery to return to his own apartments, when a light knock was heard at the door of the queen's boudoir and Jeanne made her appearance. "Madame," she said, "he is there."

"The cardinal?" asked the queen, somewhat astonished at the word "he," which signifies so many things when uttered by a woman. She did not continue. Jeanne had already introduced Monsieur de Rohan, and had withdrawn after pressing stealthily the hand of the protected protector.

The prince found himself alone with the queen, standing a few steps from her. He respectfully offered the usual salutations.

The queen, seeing this reserve so full of tact, was touched; she held out her hand to the cardinal, who had not yet raised his eyes to her.

"Monsieur," she said, "I have been informed of an action of yours which effaces many offences."

"Allow me," said the prince, trembling with an emotion which was not affected, — "allow me, Madame, to declare to you that the offences of which your Majesty speaks would be much extenuated by a word of explanation."

"I do not forbid your justifying yourself," replied the queen, with dignity; "but what you would say would

cast a shadow upon the respect and love I feel for my country and my family. You cannot exculpate yourself without wounding me, Monsieur le Cardinal. Let us not play with a fire not yet wholly extinguished, — it might, perhaps, burn your fingers or mine ; to see you in the new light, which has revealed you to me as obliging, respectful, devoted — "

" Devoted even to death," interrupted the cardinal.

" That may be. But," said Marie Antoinette, smiling, " at present it is a question only of ruin. You will be devoted even to your own ruin, Monsieur le Cardinal. That would be very brave, very noble. Fortunately, I can set things right. You shall live without being ruined ; unless, as they say, you are ruining yourself."

" Madame — "

" Oh, that is your own business. However, as a friend, since we are now good friends, let me give you some advice : Be economical, it is a pastoral virtue ; the king will like you better than if you were extravagant."

" I will become even miserly to please your Majesty."

" The king," replied the queen, with a delicate shade of meaning, " does not like misers either."

" I will become whatever your Majesty may wish," interrupted the cardinal, with ill-disguised passion.

" I was saying to you," said the queen, cutting him short, " that you would not be ruined on my account. You have become surety for me, and I thank you for it ; but I have enough to meet my liabilities ; therefore do not trouble yourself about this business, which, beginning with the first payment, will concern only myself."

" In order to close the affair, Madame," the cardinal then said, bowing, " it remains for me to present the necklace to your Majesty." At the same time he drew from his pocket the case, which he presented to the queen. She

did not look at it, which was a proof of her strong desire to see it, and trembling with joy she placed it upon a small table, without withdrawing her hand from it.

The cardinal attempted some polite remarks, which were very well received, then returned to the subject of their reconciliation. But as she had determined not to look at the diamonds in his presence, and as she was burning with the desire to see them, she listened without giving him her attention. In her preoccupation she allowed the cardinal to take her hand, which he kissed with an air of rapture. Then he took leave, thinking that he might be in the queen's way, — a thought which overwhelmed him with delight. A mere friend is never in the way, and an indifferent person still less so.

He left the queen's presence full of enthusiasm, intoxicated with hope, and ready to prove to Madame de La Motte his unbounded gratitude for having brought the negotiation to so prosperous a conclusion.

Jeanne awaited him in the carriage about a hundred paces outside the gate; she received his ardent protestations of friendship. "Well," she said, after this first explosion of his gratitude, "are you to be Richelieu or Mazarin? Did the Austrian lips give you any encouragement in ambition or love? Are you fairly launched into politics or intrigue?"

"Do not laugh, dear Countess," said the prince; "I am mad with happiness."

"Already!"

"Give me your help, and in three weeks I can be a minister."

"*Peste!* in three weeks; what a long time! The first payment falls due in a fortnight."

"Oh, all turns out happily. The queen has money and will pay; I shall have had the merit of intention only. It

is too little, Countess! on my honor, it is too little! God is my witness that I would willingly have paid the five hundred thousand francs as the price of this reconciliation."

"Make yourself easy," interrupted the countess, smiling, "you will have that merit in addition to the others. Do you desire it much?"

"I confess that I should prefer it; if the queen were under obligation to me —"

"Monseigneur, something tells me that you will have that satisfaction. Are you prepared for it?"

"I have sold the last property I possess, and have mortgaged my income and my livings for the next year."

"You have the five hundred thousand francs, then?"

"I have them; but after this payment, I shall not know what to do."

"This payment," cried Jeanne, "will give us three months of tranquillity. Who knows what may happen in three months?"

"That is true; but the king has charged me to incur no more debts."

"Two months in the ministry will make you square."

"Oh, Countess —"

"Do not be so fastidious. If you will not do it, your cousins will."

"You are always right. Where are you going?"

"Back to the queen to see what an effect your presence has produced."

"Very well. I will return to Paris."

"Why? You should attend the card-party to-night. That would be good policy; do not abandon the field."

"Unfortunately, it is necessary for me to attend a rendezvous, notice of which I received this morning before leaving home."

"A rendezvous?"

"And of rather a serious nature, if I can judge by the contents of this note. See — "

"A man's handwriting!" said the countess; and she read: —

MONSEIGNEUR, — A person wishes to communicate with you in regard to the recovery of an important sum of money. This person will wait on you this evening at Paris, to solicit the honor of an interview.

"Anonymous, — some beggar."

"No, Countess; a man would not wantonly expose himself to being beaten by my servants for having tricked me. Besides, I imagine I have seen this handwriting before."

"Go, then, Monseigneur; there is never any risk to run with people who promise you money. The worst that could happen would be that they never would pay you. Adieu, Monseigneur."

"Countess, *au revoir*."

"By the way, Monseigneur, I have two things to say to you."

"What are they?"

"If you should unexpectedly receive a large sum of money?"

"Well, Countess?"

"Something you thought you had lost, — a discovered treasure — "

"I understand you, you sly creature; you mean to claim half."

"Upon my word, Monseigneur — "

"You bring me good fortune, Countess; why should I not share with you? It is agreed; and now for the other thing."

"It is this: Do not allow yourself to encroach on those five hundred thousand francs."

"Oh, have no fear on that score."

They then separated. The cardinal returned to Paris surrounded by an atmosphere of celestial happiness. Within two hours the whole aspect of his life was changed. To him as a lover the queen had accorded more than he had dared to hope from her, and as a man of ambition he built great hopes on her apparent favor. The king, skilfully guided by his wife, would be to him the instrument of a prosperous career which thereafter nothing could check.

Prince Louis found his mind teeming with grand ideas. He had more political genius than any of his rivals. He understood the question of reform. He would bring the clergy into harmony with the people, and form one of those solid majorities which hold lasting power by their strength and their justice. To place at the head of this reform movement the queen, whom he adored, and whose unpopularity, always increasing, he would change to an unprecedented popularity, — such was the prelate's dream; and a single tender word from Marie Antoinette might have made this dream a reality.

Had that word been spoken, the cardinal would have renounced his easy conquests; the man of the world would have turned philosopher; the idler would have become an indefatigable worker. It is an easy task for great characters to exchange the paleness of debauchery for the fatigues of study. Monsieur de Rohan would have gone far, urged by love and ambition. On reaching Paris he imagined himself already immersed in work. He burned a boxful of love-letters, called his intendant to give orders for reforms in his expenditures, and had several pens got ready by a secretary, with which to write a paper on England's policy, which he thoroughly understood. After an hour of work he began to recover his self-possession, when the

sound of a bell warned him that a visitor had arrived. An usher came to him.

"Who is there?" asked the prelate.

"The person whose letter Monseigneur received this morning."

"The letter without signature?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"But that person has a name. Ask him what it is."

The usher went away, and a moment later returned. "Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro," said he.

The prince started. "Let him come in," he ordered.

The count entered, and the doors were closed behind him.

"Good God!" exclaimed the cardinal; "whom do I see?"

"Is it not true, Monseigneur," said Cagliostro, with a smile, "that I am not much changed?"

"Is it possible?" murmured Monsieur de Rohan, "Joseph Balsamo alive! — he who was believed to have lost his life in that fire. Joseph Balsamo —"

"Comte de Fenix, living, — yes, Monseigneur, and more alive than ever."

"But, Monsieur, under what name, then, do you present yourself? Why have you not kept your old name?"

"Precisely, Monseigneur, because it is old, and it recalls, to myself in the first place, and to others also, too many remembrances that are either melancholy or annoying. For example, to speak of yourself, Monseigneur, — tell me, would you not have refused admission to Joseph Balsamo?"

"I! why, no, Monsieur, no," and the cardinal, still stupefied, even neglected to offer a seat to Cagliostro.

"Then," replied the latter, "your Eminence has a better memory and greater honesty than all other men taken together."

"Monsieur, you formerly rendered me such a service —"

"Is it not true, Monseigneur," asked Balsamo, interrupting, "that I have not changed in respect to apparent age, and that I am a good illustration of the effects of my life-drops?"

"I confess it, Monsieur; but you are above the plane of humanity, — you who dispense liberally gold and health to all."

"As to health, I have nothing to say, Monseigneur; but gold, — no, oh, no."

"You make gold no longer?"

"No, Monseigneur."

"And why not?"

"Because I have lost the last particle of an indispensable ingredient, which my master, the sage Althotas, gave me after his departure from Egypt, — the only receipt of which I never had in my own possession."

"He has kept it?"

"No, — that is to say, yes; kept it and carried it with him to the tomb."

"He is dead?"

"I have lost him."

"How is it that you did not prolong the life of that man, — the indispensable custodian of an indispensable receipt, — you, who, as you say, have kept yourself alive and young through so many centuries?"

"Because, while I have power against disease and wounds, I can do nothing against accident, which destroys before my aid can be invoked."

"And it was an accident which ended the days of Althotas?"

"You should have known, since you were informed of my death."

"That fire in the Rue Saint Claude, in which you disappeared?"

"Killed Althotas, — or rather, the sage, weary of life, devoted himself to destruction."

"That is strange."

"No, it is natural. I have thought, myself, a hundred times, of ending my life."

"Yes, but you have continued to live, nevertheless."

"Because I had chosen for myself the condition of youth, in which vigorous health, passion, and physical enjoyment can still procure me some entertainment; Althotas, on the contrary, had chosen the condition of old age."

"Althotas should have done as you did."

"No, he was a man of profound intelligence and superior wisdom; of all things in the world, he desired only knowledge. Youth, with its imperious passions and pleasures, would have turned him aside from his lofty contemplations. Monseigneur, to think deeply, one must be free from fever, wrapped in impenetrable quiet. An old man meditates better than a young man; and so when sorrow takes hold of him there is no remedy. Althotas died a victim of his devotion to science. As for myself, I lead a worldly life; I waste my time, — I do absolutely nothing. I am a plant; I dare not call myself a flower. I do not live, I vegetate."

"Oh!" said the cardinal to himself, "with this man's resurrection all my surprises come back to me." Then, aloud, "You recall to me, Monsieur, the time when the magic of your words, and the marvels that you performed, doubled all my faculties, and increased, in my estimation, the value of a human being. You recall to me the two

dreams of my youth. Do you know that it is ten years since I saw you?"

"I know it, and we have both fallen off since then, Monseigneur. I am no longer a sage; I am now only a man of learning. And as for you, you are no longer a handsome young man; you are now a handsome prince. Do you remember, Monseigneur, that day when in my cabinet I promised you the love of a woman whose blond hair had been submitted to my assistant for inspection?"

The cardinal turned pale and then suddenly red. Terror and joy, in quick succession, arrested the pulsations of his heart. "I remember," he said, "but only confusedly."

"Let us see," said Cagliostro, smiling, "whether I might still pass for a magician. Wait a moment, while I direct my search." He seemed to reflect. "That fair-haired child of your amorous dreams," he resumed, after a silence, — "where is she? what is she doing? Ah! *parbleu!* I see her, — yes, and you yourself have seen her to-day; nay, you have just come from her presence."

The cardinal pressed an icy hand upon his palpitating heart. "Monsieur," he said, in a tone so low that Cagliostro could hardly hear the words, "for mercy's sake —"

"You would prefer that we should talk about something else?" said the magician, politely. "Oh, I am at your orders, Monseigneur; dispose of me as you please," and he stretched himself unceremoniously on a sofa, to which, during the whole of this interesting conversation the cardinal had not thought of inviting him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEBTOR AND CREDITOR.

The cardinal observed his visitor with an almost stupefied air.

"Well," said the latter, "now that we have renewed our acquaintance, Monseigneur, let us converse, if you please."

"Yes," replied the prelate, gradually collecting himself, "Yes, let us talk about the recovery of that debt which — which —"

"About which I wrote you, you mean. Your Eminence is anxious to know —"

"Oh! it was a pretext, I imagine."

"No, Monseigneur, not the least in the world; it was a reality, and a most serious one, I assure you. This debt is well worth collecting, since it amounts to five hundred thousand francs; that is a considerable sum of money."

"And a sum which you were kind enough to lend me," cried the cardinal, turning pale.

"Yes, Monseigneur, which I lent you," said Balsamo; "I like to see in so great a prince as you so good a memory."

The cardinal had received the blow; he felt the cold perspiration streaming down his face. "I had thought," he said, trying to smile, "that Joseph Balsamo, the supernatural man, had carried my debt to the tomb, as he had thrown my receipt for it into the fire."

"Monseigneur," gravely replied the count, "the life of Joseph Balsamo is indestructible, as is this sheet of paper which you thought destroyed. Death can avail nothing against the elixir of life; fire is powerless against asbestos."

"I do not understand," said the cardinal, stupefied.

"You will understand, Monseigneur, I am sure," said Cagliostro.

"How so?"

"When you recognize your signature," and he offered a folded paper to the prince, who even before opening it, exclaimed, —

"My receipt!"

"Yes, Monseigneur, your receipt," replied Cagliostro, with a slight smile, accompanied by a formal bow.

"But I saw you burn it, Monsieur."

"I threw this paper in the fire, it is true," said the count, "but as I have told you, Monseigneur, by accident you had written on a piece of asbestos, instead of writing on ordinary paper, so that the receipt remained uninjured among the cinders."

"Monsieur," said the cardinal, haughtily, for he thought the presentation of this receipt a proof of distrust, — "Monsieur, believe me, I should not have denied my debt even without this paper; therefore you were wrong to deceive me."

"I deceive you, Monseigneur! I did not for a moment think of it, I assure you."

The cardinal nodded his head. "You made me think, Monsieur, that the debt was cancelled."

"To leave you in calm enjoyment and happy possession of five hundred thousand francs," replied Balsamo, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"But, in short, Monsieur," continued the cardinal, "why have you left such a sum for ten years unclaimed?"

"I knew, Monseigneur, that it was safe. Exigencies, play, robbers, have successively diminished my wealth. But knowing that I had this sum in reserve, I have waited patiently until the last moment."

"And the last moment has arrived?"

"Alas! yes, Monseigneur!"

"So that you can no longer wait patiently?"

"It is, indeed, impossible," replied Cagliostro.

"You want it at once?"

"If it please you to pay it,"

The cardinal was at first silent through despair. Then he said, in a hoarse voice, "Monsieur le Comte, we unhappy princes of the earth do not improvise fortunes as quickly as you enchanters, who can command the spirits of darkness and light."

"Oh, Monseigneur, believe me, I should not have asked you for this money if I had not known beforehand that you had it."

"I have five hundred thousand francs!" cried the cardinal.

"Thirty thousand in gold, eleven thousand in silver, and the rest in notes, which are in this Boule cabinet."

The cardinal turned white. "Oh, Monsieur, you knew that?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; and I know that you have made great sacrifices to procure this sum. I have heard that you bought this money at twice its value."

"Oh, that is very true."

"But —"

"But —" cried the unhappy prince.

"But, Monseigneur," continued Cagliostro, "during these ten years, I have often been in want and embarrassment; yet I have kept this paper back, — which represented half a million, — in order not to trouble

you. I think, therefore, that we are very nearly quits, Monseigneur."

"Quits, Monsieur!" cried the prince; "oh, do not say that we are quits, since you so generously lent me a sum of such importance; quits! oh, no, no! I shall forever be under obligations to you. Only, Monsieur le Comte, I ask why you, who could at any time during these ten years have demanded this money, have kept silence? During these ten years there have been twenty times when I might have paid you with ease."

"While to-day —"

"Oh, to-day, — I will not conceal it from you," cried the prince, — "this restitution which you exact, for you do exact it, do you not?"

"Alas, Monseigneur!"

"Well, it embarrasses me beyond measure."

Cagliostro made a movement with his head and shoulders which signified, "It cannot be helped, Monseigneur; it is so, and cannot be otherwise."

"But you who know everything," cried the prince, — "you who read hearts, and see through the doors of cabinets, — which is sometimes even worse, — doubtless know also the sacred and mysterious purpose for which this money was destined."

"You are mistaken, Monseigneur," said Cagliostro, in a freezing tone; "no, I do not even suspect it; and my own secrets have brought me so much sorrow, deception, and misery that I no longer seek to penetrate the secrets of others unless they are personally interesting to me. It concerned me to know whether you had this money, because I wished to claim it; but once having ascertained that you had it, I did not trouble myself to think for what purpose it was destined. Besides, if at this moment I knew the cause of your embarrassment, it might seem

so grave a matter as almost to force me to waive my claim, which really I cannot afford to do. Therefore I prefer to be ignorant."

"Oh, Monsieur," cried the cardinal, whose pride and sensibility were aroused by these last words of Cagliostro, "do not think that I wish to move you by an account of my personal embarrassments. You have your own interests to consider; they are guaranteed by this note, which bears my signature, that is enough. You shall have your five hundred thousand francs."

Cagliostro bowed.

"I know very well," continued the cardinal, overwhelmed with grief at the thought of losing so much money, so painfully acquired, —"I know, Monsieur, that this paper is merely an acknowledgement of the debt, and fixes no term of payment."

"Your Eminence will pardon me," replied the count; "but I refer to the receipt itself, on which I see written, —

"I acknowledge having received from Monsieur Joseph Balsamo the sum of five hundred thousand francs, which I will pay to him on demand.

"(Signed) LOUIS DE ROHAN."

The cardinal shuddered through his whole frame; he had forgotten not only the debt, but the terms in which it had been acknowledged.

"You see, Monseigneur," continued Balsamo, "that I do not ask the impossible. You cannot pay it; be it so. Only I regret that your Eminence appears to forget that this sum was given voluntarily by Joseph Balsamo, in an hour of great need, to Monsieur de Rohan, whom he did not know. That, it seems to me, was conduct worthy a great nobleman, which Monsieur de Rohan, so great a nobleman in every way, might have imitated by paying it

promptly on demand. But you have thought differently, so let us say no more about it; I withdraw my note. Adieu, Monseigneur," and Cagliostro coolly folded the paper and was about to put it in his pocket.

The cardinal stopped him. "Monsieur le Comte," he said, "a Rohan allows no one to give him lessons in generosity. Besides, this would simply be a lesson in honesty. Give me that note, Monsieur, that I may pay it."

It was Cagliostro then who in his turn seemed to hesitate. In fact, the pale face, dilated eyes, the trembling hand of the cardinal seemed to inspire him with a lively compassion.

The cardinal, proud as he was, comprehended this good feeling of Cagliostro, and for a moment hoped that it would be followed by good results. But suddenly the count's expression grew hard, a cloud came over his knitted brows, and he handed the note to the cardinal.

Monsieur de Rohan, struck to the heart, lost not a moment; he went to the cabinet which Cagliostro had spoken of, and drew out a bundle of notes drawn on the treasury of streams and forests; then he pointed with his finger to several bags of money, and opened a drawer which was full of gold. "Monsieur le Comte," he said, "here are your five hundred thousand francs; but I still owe you two hundred and fifty thousand francs, as interest, even supposing you to refuse compound interest, which would make the sum much larger. My intendant shall make up the account, and I will give you security for the payment of this amount, only asking that you will give me time."

"Monseigneur," replied Cagliostro, "I lent five hundred thousand francs to Monsieur de Rohan, who owes me five hundred thousand francs and nothing more. If I had wished to receive interest, I should have stipulated for

it in the receipt. As representative of Joseph Balsamo, or his heir, if you please, — for Joseph Balsamo is really dead, — I have no right to anything but the sum specified in the acknowledgment; you pay it, I receive it, and thank you, begging you to accept my respectful salutations. I will take the notes with me, Monseigneur; and as I have need of the whole amount this very day I will send for the gold and silver, which I beg you to have ready for me." And after uttering these words, to which the cardinal was not able to reply, Cagliostro put the bundle of notes in his pocket, bowed respectfully to the prince, in whose hands he left the receipt, and withdrew.

"The misfortune affects me alone," sighed Monsieur de Rohan, after the departure of Cagliostro, "since the queen has the money to pay, and no Joseph Balsamo can come and call upon her for an old debt of five hundred thousand francs."

CHAPTER XIX.

FAMILY ACCOUNTS.

It was the day before that appointed by the queen for the first payment to Boehmer and Bossange. Monsieur de Calonne had not yet fulfilled his promise. His accounts had not been signed by the king. The minister had had many things to occupy his time, and had somewhat forgotten the queen. She, on her side, thought it derogatory to her dignity to refresh the memory of the controller of finance. Having received his promise she waited. She, however, began to grow anxious, and to make inquiries; she was trying to devise some plan for speaking to Monsieur de Calonne, without compromising her queenly dignity, when she received a note from the minister. "This evening," he wrote, "the business with which your Majesty has done me the honor to charge me will be settled by the Council; and the money will be delivered to the queen to-morrow morning."

Marie Antoinette recovered all her gayety, and thought no more of the morrow. She was even seen, during her walks, to seek the most retired spots, as if wishing to withdraw her thoughts from every material and mundane subject. She was still walking with Madame de Lamballe and the Comte d'Artois, who had joined her, when the king withdrew to the Council after dinner.

The king was in an irritable humor. The news from Russia was bad. A vessel had been lost in the Gulf of Lyons. Certain provinces had refused to pay taxes. A fine

map of the world, polished and varnished by the king himself, had cracked by reason of the excessive heat; and Europe had split into two parts, at the junction of thirty degrees of latitude with fifty-five of longitude. His Majesty was out of humor with everybody, even Monsieur de Calonne.

In vain the latter produced his fine, scented portfolio, in his most pleasant manner. The king began, silent and morose, to draw on a piece of white paper irregular figures, which signified "Tempest," just as the figures of men and horses signified "Fine weather."

For it was the fancy of the king to make drawings during the meetings of the Council. Louis XVI. did not like to look people in the face, for he was timid. A pen in his hand gave him assurance and support. While he was thus occupied the orator might unfold his arguments; the king, casting a furtive glance, would catch now and then a little of the fire of the speaker's looks, — just enough to prevent his forgetting the man while considering the idea.

If he spoke himself, — and he could speak well, — his drawing took from his discourse every appearance of pretension, for there were no gestures to be made. He could be deliberate in what he said, or animated, as he pleased; the lines upon the paper took the place of oratorical flourishes.

On this occasion, then, the king took up a pen, according to his custom, and the ministers began the reading of their outlines, or of diplomatic notes. The king did not breathe a word; he allowed the foreign correspondence to be gone through with as if he did not understand a word about such matters.

But at last the details of the monthly accounts were reached; then the king raised his head. Monsieur de

Calonne had just unfolded his plan relative to the loan projected for the following year. The king began to draw furiously. "Always borrowing money," he said, "without knowing how it is to be paid! That is a problem for you, Monsieur de Calonne."

"Sire, a loan is only turning a stream from one direction to cause it to flow more abundantly in another. In deepening the channel you only increase the supply; therefore let us not think of paying, but only of obtaining present funds, for the problem of which your Majesty speaks is not, 'How can we pay?' but, 'Can we find creditors?'"

The king made his crossed lines in the very darkest shade, but he did not say a word; his lines spoke for themselves.

Monsieur de Calonne having explained his plan, which was approved by his colleagues, the king took the proposal and signed it, sighing meanwhile.

"Now that we have money," said Monsieur de Calonne, "let us spend it."

The king looked at his minister with a wry face, and his crossed lines became one enormous blot.

Monsieur de Calonne presented him a statement consisting of a list of pensions, gifts, and payments to be made. The statement was not long, and was very clear; the king looked over the pages, and ran over the sum total.

"One million one hundred thousand francs for so little! How can this be?" and he let his pen rest.

"Read, Sire, read, and be pleased to remark that of the eleven hundred thousand francs, one single item consists of five hundred thousands francs."

"What item, Monsieur?"

"An advance made to her Majesty the queen, Sire."

"To the queen!" cried Louis XVI. "Five hundred thousand francs to the queen! Eh, Monsieur, that is not possible!"

"Pardon, Sire! but the figures are correct."

"Five hundred thousand francs to the queen!" repeated the king. "There must be some error. Last week — no, a fortnight ago — I paid the queen her quarterly allowance."

"Sire, if the queen has need of money, — and it is well known what use she makes of it, — it is not extraordinary — "

"No, no!" cried the king, who wished his frugality to be publicly known, and felt the need of conciliating the people, so that they would applaud the queen when she went to the Opera. "The queen does not wish for this money, Monsieur de Calonne. The queen told me that a ship of the line was better than jewels. The queen thinks that if France is obliged to borrow money to feed its poor, we who are rich should lend to France. Therefore if the queen needs this money, her merit will be all the greater if she waits for it; and I guarantee that she will wait."

The ministers applauded this patriotic outburst of the king, whom the divine Horace would not have called *uxorius* at that moment. Monsieur de Calonne alone, who knew the queen's embarrassment, insisted on the allowance being granted.

"Truly," said the king, "you are more interested for us than we are for ourselves. Compose yourself, Monsieur de Calonne."

"The queen, Sire, will accuse me of having shown very little zeal in her service."

"I will plead your cause with her."

"The queen never asks for money but when compelled by necessity."

"If the queen has needs, they are less imperious, I hope, than those of the poor; and she will be the first to acknowledge it."

"Sire —"

"The matter is settled," said the king, resolutely, and he began to draw the crossed lines.

"You cancel this credit, Sire?" said Monsieur de Calonne, in consternation.

"I cancel it," replied Louis XVI., majestically, "and I fancy I hear the queen, in her generosity, thanking me for having so well understood her heart."

Monsieur de Calonne bit his lips. Louis, content with this personal sacrifice, accepted all the other items with blind confidence; and he drew a beautiful zebra, surrounded by zeros, saying, "I have this evening gained five hundred thousand francs, — a pretty good day's work for a king, Calonne. You must carry this good news to the queen; you will see, you will see."

"Ah, my God, Sire!" murmured the minister, "I should be grieved to deprive you of the pleasure of such an avowal. Every one according to his deserts."

"So be it," replied the king. "Let us break up. We have accomplished work enough when that which has been done is good. Ah, here comes the queen; let us go to meet her, Calonne."

"Sire, I beg your Majesty's pardon, but I have my signatures to attend to," and he slipped off as quickly as possible through the corridor.

The king went courageously, and beaming with delight, to meet Marie Antoinette, who was singing in the vestibule, leaning on the arm of the Comte d'Artois.

"Madame," he said, "you have had a pleasant walk, I hope."

"Yes, Sire; and have you had a successful meeting?"

"You may judge of that; I have gained for you five hundred thousand francs."

"Calonne has kept his word," thought the queen.

"Only imagine, Calonne had put you down in his statement for half a million."

"Oh!" said Marie Antoinette, smiling.

"And I — I struck it out. Five hundred thousand francs gained by the stroke of a pen!"

"How, struck out?" said the queen, growing pale.

"Completely. What I have done will be of great advantage to you. Good-evening, Madame, good-evening."

"Sire! Sire!"

"I am very hungry; I am going in. Do you not think my supper has been well earned?"

"But, Sire, listen."

But Louis XVI. skipped off, delighted with his joke, leaving the queen astounded, mute, and dismayed.

"Brother, find Monsieur de Calonne for me," she said finally, to the Comte d'Artois; "there is some trick under all this." Just then the following note was brought to the queen, —

"Your Majesty will have learned that the king refused your grant. It is incomprehensible, Madame, and I retired from the Council sick and full of grief."

"Read," she said, passing the note to the Comte d'Artois.

"And there are those who say that we squander the revenue, sister!" cried the prince. "It is a proceeding — "

"Quite husband-like," murmured the queen.

"I offer you my condolences, dear sister, and it is a lesson for me; I was going to ask for money to-morrow."

"Let Madame de La Motte be immediately sent for," said the queen to Madame de Misery, after long meditation.

CHAPTER XX.

QUEEN AND WOMAN.

THE courier who had been sent to Paris in search of Madame de La Motte, found the countess, or rather did not find her, at the house of the Cardinal de Rohan.

Jeanne had gone thither to pay a visit to his Eminence. She had dined there, had taken supper there, and was conversing with him about that disastrous restitution, when the courier came to inquire if the countess were there. The well-trained guard replied that his Eminence had gone out, and that Madame de La Motte was not there, but that nothing was easier than to give her the message from the queen, since she would probably come to the hôtel in the evening.

"She must repair to Versailles as soon as possible," said the courier, and he departed, having left the same message in all the supposed domiciles of the wandering countess.

But the messenger had hardly gone before the porter, executing his commission without going far, sent his wife to Madame de La Motte with the message as she sat at supper with the cardinal, philosophizing upon the instability of large sums of money.

The countess knew that she must depart immediately. The cardinal himself placed her in a light carriage without armorial bearings, and the countess was driven with such rapidity that in less than an hour she had arrived at the

palace. She was introduced without delay into the queen's bedchamber. The only attendant in the apartment was Madame de Misery, who was reading in the small boudoir, the queen's toilet for the night having been completed.

Marie Antoinette was embroidering, or pretending to embroider, listening eagerly for every noise from without, when Jeanne hurried into the room.

"Ah!" cried the queen, "you have come. So much the better. I have news, Countess."

"Good news, Madame."

"You shall judge of that. The king has refused the five hundred thousand francs."

"To Monsieur de Calonne?"

"To everybody. The king will not give me any more money. Such things happen only to me."

"My God!" murmured the countess.

"Incredible, is it not, Countess? To refuse, to cancel the order already drawn up! But it is useless to talk about it. You must return quickly to Paris."

"Yes, Madame."

"And tell the cardinal that since he is so kind, I will accept the five hundred thousand francs until I receive my next quarterly allowance. It is selfish on my part, I know, Countess, but it is necessary."

"Madame," murmured Jeanne, "we are lost! Monsieur le Cardinal has no more money."

The queen started, as if she had just been wounded or insulted. "No more money?" she stammered.

"Madame, an unexpected claim has been made upon Monsieur de Rohan. It was a debt of honor, and he has paid it."

"Five hundred thousand francs?"

"Yes, Madame."

"But —"

"The last money he had; he has no further resources."

The queen was silent, as if stunned by this misfortune. "Am I really awake?" she said. "It is only to me that such things happen. How do you know this, Countess, — that Monsieur de Rohan has no more money?"

"He told me of this disaster not an hour and a half ago, Madame. This disaster is the more irreparable, since the five hundred thousand francs were what they call 'the bottom of the drawer.'"

The queen leaned her head on her hands.

"Something must be done," she said.

"What is the queen going to do?" thought Jeanne.

"You see, Countess, it is a terrible lesson, which will punish me for having committed, without the knowledge of the king, an action of slight importance, of unworthy ambition, or pitiful vanity. I had no need of this necklace, now acknowledge it."

"True, Madame; but if a queen should consult only her needs and her tastes —"

"I wish above all to consult my peace of mind, the happiness of my family. It required nothing less than this first check to prove to me to how much annoyance I was about to expose myself, how fruitful in disgrace the road I had chosen. I renounce it. Let us always proceed frankly and straightforwardly."

"Madame!"

"And as a beginning, let us sacrifice our vanity on the altar of duty, as Monsieur Dorat would say." Then, with a sigh, "Ah, and yet that necklace was very beautiful!" she murmured.

"It is so still, Madame; and it is as good as money too, this necklace."

"From this time forth it is for me but a collection of

stones, — stones which, after one has played with them as children play with marbles, are thrown aside and forgotten."

"What does the queen mean?"

"The queen means, dear Countess, that you will take the necklace brought by Monsieur de Rohan, and carry it back to the jewellers, Boehmer and Bossange."

"To return it?"

"Precisely."

"But, Madame, your Majesty has given two hundred and fifty thousand francs as earnest money."

"And that will be a gain of two hundred and fifty thousand francs; my accounts will then agree with those of the king."

"Madame, Madame," cried the countess, "to lose thus a quarter of a million! For it may happen that the jewellers will make some difficulty about returning funds of which they may have disposed."

"I expect it, and intend giving up the earnest money on condition that the bargain shall be broken. Now that I see my way out of the affair I feel easier. This necklace brought with it cares, griefs, fears, suspicions. These diamonds would never have had fire enough to dry all the tears which I feel hanging like clouds over me. Countess, bring me that casket immediately. The jewellers make a good thing of it. Two hundred and fifty thousand francs bonus is a handsome profit; they would make no greater profit by selling it to me, and besides they have the necklace. I think they will not complain, and that no one will know anything about it. The cardinal aimed only to give me pleasure. You will tell him that it is my pleasure not to have this necklace; and if he is a man of sense, he will understand me; if he is a good priest, he will encourage and strengthen me in my sacrifice." The

queen held out to Jeanne the closed casket; the latter gently thrust it back. "Madame," said she, "why not try to obtain more time?"

"Ask for time? — no!"

"I said 'obtain,' Madame."

"To ask is to humiliate one's self, Countess; to obtain is to be humiliated. I can understand how one may humiliate himself in behalf of a person he loves, or to benefit a living creature, were it only a dog; but not for the sake of gaining the right to keep these stones, which scorch like burning coals, — no advice could ever persuade me to do that, never! Take away the casket, my dear, take it."

"But consider, Madame, the noise these jewellers may make, — through politeness, at least, and sympathy with you. Your rejection of the diamonds will compromise you as much as your acceptance of them might have done. Every one will know that you have had them in your possession."

"No one will know about it. I no longer owe anything to these jewellers; I will not receive them again. For my two hundred and fifty thousand francs they can at least be silent. And my enemies, instead of being able to say that I spend a million and a half for diamonds, can say only that I lose money in speculation, which is less disagreeable. Take them away, Countess, and cordially thank Monsieur de Rohan for his kindness and his good intentions." With a peremptory movement she placed the casket in Jeanne's hands, who took possession of them with a peculiar emotion.

"You have no time to lose," continued the queen. "The less anxiety the jewellers have to suffer, the more assured we shall be of their silence. Go at once; and let no one see the casket. Go home first; for an immediate

resort to the jewellers might arouse the suspicions of the police, who are much interested in what I do. Then, when you have thus eluded the spies, go to the jewellers, and afterward bring me their receipt."

"Yes, Madame; this shall be done, since you so determine."

Jeanne put the casket under her cloak, taking care that its shape should not be perceptible, and entered her carriage with all the zeal which her august accomplice in this act might have desired. In the first place, obeying orders, she went home; she then sent back the carriage to Monsieur de Rohan, so that the coachman should know nothing of her secret. She changed her costume for one less elegant and more appropriate for her nocturnal expedition. Her maid, while rapidly dressing her, noticed that she was thoughtful and preoccupied during that operation, to which usually she gave close attention.

In fact, Jeanne was not thinking of her toilet; her mind was fixed on a new and strange idea suggested by the occasion. She asked herself whether the cardinal would not make a grave mistake in allowing the queen to return the necklace, and whether that error would not imperil the career of which he dreamed, and which, as sharer in the queen's secrets, he might hope to enjoy. To act on the orders of Marie Antoinette without consulting him would be to fail in the most obvious duties of their partnership. Though he was at the end of his resources, might not the cardinal prefer to sell himself rather than see the queen deprived of an object she had so much desired?

"I cannot do otherwise," Jeanne said to herself, "than consult the cardinal. Fourteen hundred thousand francs!" she added; "he cannot obtain fourteen hundred thousand francs." Then turning suddenly to her maid, "Go, Rose," she said.

The maid went out, and Madame de La Motte resumed her meditations. "What a sum! what a fortune! what a brilliant life! How well is all the happiness and splendor to be procured by so much money represented by the little serpent of jewels which glitters in this casket."

Jeanne opened the jewel-case and scorched her eyes by contact with those streaming flames. She took up the necklace, wound it round her fingers, and clasped it in her little hands, saying: "I can thus grasp fourteen hundred thousand francs; for this necklace is worth fourteen hundred thousand francs, and the jewellers would pay that price for it even now. Strange destiny, which suffers the little Jeanne de Valois, an obscure mendicant, to touch the hand of a queen (the first queen in the world), and to hold in her hands, for a little while at least, fourteen hundred thousand francs, — a sum of money which is never allowed to travel alone, but goes attended by an armed escort, or assured by guarantees not less than those of a cardinal and a queen. All this within my ten fingers! How heavy it is, and yet how light! In order to transport the equivalent of this necklace in gold — that precious metal — I should need two horses. To carry it in notes — and are notes always paid? Is there not a signature to write, and an account to keep? And then a note is only paper; it may be destroyed by fire, air, or water. A bank-note is not current in all countries; and it betrays its origin, it reveals the name of its maker and of its bearer. A bank-note, after a certain lapse of time, loses a part of, or all, its value. Diamonds, on the contrary, are of a hard material which can resist everything, and which every one recognizes, appreciates, admires, and is ready to buy, whether in London, Berlin, Madrid, or even in Brazil. Every one knows the value of diamonds, especially of diamonds like these. How beautiful they

are! — wonderful, either together or taken singly! Each one by itself is probably worth more, in proportion, than all together are worth. But of what am I thinking?" she said, suddenly. "Come, quick! I must make up my mind either to go to the cardinal or to carry the necklace to the jewellers as the queen directed."

Jeanne rose, still holding the shining diamonds in her hands. "They will be returned to that cold jeweller," she said to herself, "who will weigh them, and polish them with a brush; and they might have shone on the bosom of Marie Antoinette. Boehmer will cry out at first, but will be quieted by the reflection that he has both the profit of the sale and the merchandise itself. Ah, I forgot, — in what form should that receipt be written? It is an important question; yes, the making of that receipt requires diplomacy. It must be conceived in such terms as not to compromise Boehmer, or the queen, or the cardinal, or myself. I can never write it alone; I must have advice. The cardinal — Oh, no; if the cardinal loved me more, or if he were richer and could give me the diamonds —"

She sat down on the sofa, turning the diamonds in her hand; her head was hot, and her mind full of confused thoughts which at times frightened her, and which she repelled with feverish energy. Suddenly her eye became more tranquil, more fixed on the image of a single persistent idea. She was not conscious of the flight of the moments; she was not aware that she was forming a conclusion that could not afterward be changed. Like swimmers who have placed their feet on a quicksand, every movement she made to extricate herself only buried her the more deeply. An hour passed while she thus abandoned herself to the silent, absorbing contemplation of a mysterious purpose. She then rose slowly, pale as an in-

spired priestess, and rang for her maid. It was two o'clock in the morning. "Find me a carriage, or a wheeled chair if no carriage can be had," said she.

The servant found a carriage in the old Rue du Temple. Madame de La Motte entered it alone. Ten minutes later the carriage stopped at the door of the journalist Reteau de Villette.

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